PETROGRAD

(THE CITY OF TROUBLE)

1914-1918

MERIEL BUCHANAN

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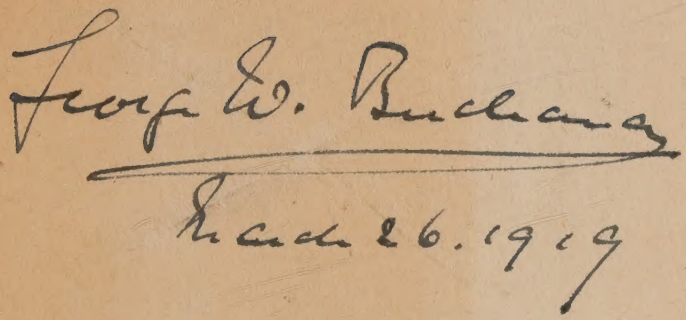

PETROGRAD

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THE CITY OF TROUBLE

1914–1918

BY

MERIEL BUCHANAN

DAUGHTER OF THE
BRITISH AMBASSADOR

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A FOREWORD

It has been one of the characteristics of the Russian Revolution—perhaps of every Revolution—that the spectators of its evolution have named every fresh development a climax. Looking back now through the events in Russia during 1917, one sees the abdication of the Czar, the revolt of Korniloff, the Bolshevik *coup d'état* as successive climaxes, but none of them as, in any sense, an ultimate climax; although one is now a year and a half from that first wonderful day in March when the Cossacks lined the Nevski and reassured the people who pressed against their horses that they would not shoot on their 'brothers,' the perspective is still not clear and the day is still too soon for the authority of history.

There is, however, one thing that may be done, and I believe that I am speaking without any exaggeration when I say that this book of Miss Buchanan's is the first attempt of any writer in any language to give to the world a sense of the *atmosphere* of Russia under the shock and terror of those world-shaking events. By atmosphere

I mean the summoning of big and little things to form a mosaic, coloured, intricate, unique that may lie behind and beneath the outside obvious events. We have read now in many books accounts of the policy of the Czar, the first magnificence of Kerensky and his later weakness, the disintegration in the army, the speeches and opinions of Lenin, Trotsky, and the rest, but what we have not read as yet are the things that the man who sells pies in Ellisseieff's, the provision shop in the Nevski, thought of it, how the ladies who collected tickets on the trams looked at the changing manners and customs of their passengers, what the boys who ran up and down the switchback railway on the farther side of the Neva said when they saw a famous General shovelling the snow for a rouble an hour. I do not say that Miss Buchanan has actually informed us of those particular things, but I do say that she has given us a picture of human, private life under the pressure of vast historical events that is precious and permanent in its value. She has given us this not only because she was herself an actual observer of them but also because she has the gift of imagination, the gift of colour, and a philosophy that is more than petulant.

I would not suggest that she has not also given us her view of the larger, more historical events:

her picture of the Russian Court is of the greatest interest and her account of the weeks immediately preceding the Bolshevik rising are of political value, but it is for the smaller, more important things that her book is unique; no one having read it can deny that it is true, vivid, personal, and moving.

Miss Buchanan has placed us all under a very real and serious debt. She has also done Russia a noble service.

HUGH WALPOLE.

August 12, 1918.

1

THE EVENING REVIEW AT KRASSNOE

THE 2nd of July, 1914, the French President, accompanied by a large suite, visited the Russian Court, and in the same moorings near Kronstadt where—scarcely ten days earlier—the *Lion*, the *Queen Mary*, the *Princess Royal* and the *New Zealand* had lain, French battleships now cast anchor; French flags fluttered from all the houses; French officers and sailors crowded the town, and on the Tuesday, July 23, the President accompanied the Emperor at the evening review of the troops at Krassnoe.

Down the straight road that led across the gray level plains a stream of motors passed. Under the cloudless splendour of the sky the fields lay burnt iron dry. An acrid smell of burning turf filled the air, and low down on the horizon lay a haze of smoke from some distant forest fire.

Behind us Petersburg was hidden in a mist of heat—Petersburg where an undercurrent of unrest and trouble seemed to be brewing, where workmen

gathered at street corners and whole factories were out on strike. But the little faint chill of fear I had felt as we drove through the town was forgotten out here on the plains with, away to the right, the silver shimmer of the sea and all around the hurrying crowd who seemed to have no care or trouble in the world. One of the Imperial motors flying the white flag with the double eagle passed us in a cloud of dust. An officer with the silver aiguillets that showed him to be an A.D.C. to some General cantered by, intent evidently on some order to be delivered; three or four soldiers sitting at the doorway of a wooden barracks were drinking tea out of little tin cans; a woman with a red and white handkerchief over her head stood still to stare at us.

From the distance came the sound of a military band, somewhere a bugle rang out clearly, and as we drew up on the top of the incline we could see a stream of red and white pennons moving along below us. Just here the eternal flatness was broken, the ground sloped before us into a broad, low valley, and opposite lay the little hill with the village and church of Krassnoe and the low wooden barracks, summer quarters of the Guard regiments of Petersburg.

The crowd of motors, soldiers, and brightly dressed women was almost impassable. A wooden

estrade had been erected for the wives of officers, the officials and members of the Diplomatic body, while farther on a tent had been put up for the Emperor and Empress and the French President.

A flutter of talk and laughter, gay, vapid, light as thistledown filled the air. Outside the wooden railings officers paused to stand a moment in conversation, looking up into some smiling downward bent face, and then moved on with a silver jingling of spurs. Opposite the estrade a line of troops was drawn up immovable and silent, far away across the plain a regiment was passing, and the dust raised by their marching feet made a golden haze above them.

Disjointed and broken fragments of talk reached me from the chattering crowd all round me. Somewhere in the background a woman's voice complained bitterly about the carelessness of a nurse who had allowed her little boy to get nearly run over by a peasant's cart. On my left a woman was discussing an evening frock just received from a Paris dressmaker—there was a rumour that skirts would be wider but it was probably not true, and no sleeves were to be worn, just a diamond strap on the shoulders; of course if one had perfect arms it was all right, but otherwise what a very trying fashion! A little in front of me two girls were whispering and giggling, discussing some secret

which I could not help overhearing: 'Of course I pretended that our meeting him was just a perfect accident—Miss Evans never suspected for a moment that it had all been arranged beforehand. My dear——' here the whisper became inaudible, and then burst out again with a gurgle of laughter: 'Oh, Sonia, he has such adorable eyebrows!'

I wondered vaguely what constituted the charm of adorable eyebrows and then forgot to answer my own question as I watched a fat old General with a red face come limping down between the long lines of troops. Most evidently his brightly polished boots were too tight for him, and it made my own feet ache to think of the pain he must be suffering when the ground itself was so baked by the sun that one seemed to feel the heat of it rising up into one's face. Either that or the extreme height of his collar had affected his temper, for twice he paused to bark out some harsh reprimand to the immovable soldiers down the line, and once his fat, chubby hand flew out to point with no gentle terms to the delinquency of an unfastened strap.

The sun was nearing the rim of the Krassnoe hill, the little church stood bathed in golden radiance, high up in the sky an aeroplane hung like a bird of prey. Then suddenly at some unheard signal a silence fell on all the waiting crowd, and for a

moment a hush of almost breathless stillness held them as in a spell. Then from very far away came a burst of cheering that, drawing ever nearer, grew in sound and volume like the slowly rising strength of a distant storm. Something rose in my throat, and the serried ranks of soldiers opposite to me wavered and shook. A woman next to me whispered, 'Oh, *mon Dieu*!' and softly dabbed her eyes with a lace handkerchief. I saw the girl in front of me clutch hold of her companion and heard her voice, shaken by a new note, say sharply: 'Sonia—I am afraid—why am I afraid?'

And then, riding on a white horse, the Emperor passed in that tempest of cheering. I had a confused impression of grave blue eyes, of a hand raised in greeting, of a rustling of skirts as the women round me bent in low obeisance, of a crowd of officers who followed him on horseback, Grand Dukes, Generals, the varied uniforms of the foreign military attachés.

The cheering broke out again spasmodically as the carriages with the Empress, the French President, the Heir Apparent, and the young Grand Duchesses passed slowly by. White horses with outriders, white satin cushions, flower-wreathed hats and the smiling faces of young girls! For them the soldiers cheered, for them and for the little boy in the sailor suit and for the white-haired

old gentleman in the black frock coat and top hat. But for the woman with the hard, tragic face and the haunted eyes—I wondered, and then put the thought aside as the band burst out into the National Anthem and all that enormous line of soldiers, stretched away across the plain, stood stiffly at attention.

One after the other the officers representing each regiment stood forward with their sergeants behind them, giving the day's report to the Sovereign, who was their Commander-in-Chief, and represented to each soldier the 'Little Father' for whom if need be they must fight and lay down their lives.

The sun touched the rim of the Krassnoe hill, the great plains lay bathed in golden light, the troops standing immovable seemed shadow-like and unreal. A woman on my right turned to me, her eyes full of a sudden thoughtfulness, 'I wonder —what is an army for?' she whispered. 'It's so immense, isn't it? And what we see is only after all such a little part.'

An officer standing by the balustrade just below us looked up at her—'Just a toy for Kings and Emperors to play with, madame,' he said, his words half grave, half mocking.

The woman shook her head. 'Rather dangerous toys,' she answered, and even as she spoke the

crash of a gun broke the dreaming peace, and she gave a little start, then mocked at her own fear with a smile, 'I had forgotten. Of course it is only the sunset.'

Again a hush fell on all the serried ranks of troops, and in the profound, reverent stillness the band struck up the soldiers' evening hymn. The throbbing notes died out against the golden sky, the aeroplane hovering over the hill swooped down into the sunset and disappeared.

Released from the spell of silence, the crowd burst out again into their laughing chatter. Motors buzzed and hooted wildly, horses' feet clattered on the iron hard road, a cloud of dust lay rosy and golden over the valley as the troops marched back to camp.

There was a state banquet that evening in the Palace of Krassnoe, and after that a performance in the little wooden theatre, where the best artists of the opera and ballet were to take part. But, having had dinner with some friends, we drove back early while the sky was still a bright, luminous amber, with the church standing up against it as if cut out of deep blue paper. A white mist stole ghost-like across the plain, the pall of smoke still hung heavily on the horizon. And over Petersburg a cloud of heat and smoke lay like a faint, violet veil pierced here and there by a shimmering dome

or a golden spire that seemed to catch the reflection of the dead sunset and glow like a burnished flame.

Ever closer grew the air; the narrow, badly-paved streets seemed unbearably hot and suffocating. A crowd of dirty, evil-looking men gathered at the corners scowled at us as we passed, a little boy with a torn red blouse shouted out some unspeakable insult and threw an old bit of stick at the motor. The town itself was ominously quiet, hardly a cab was to be seen. The trams were practically empty, soldiers with rifles passed up and down the deserted streets.

The red glow in the sky had faded now, but the magic of a summer night in the far north held the town in a dream of opal-coloured light. The river gleamed blue and luminous and dark beneath the cloudless sky, the great palaces along the Quay lay wrapped in sleeping mystery, the little steamers passed like silent shadows on the dreaming waters, in the black mass of the Fortress one solitary light burnt dimly.

II

JULY 24

THAT day the wave of almost tropical heat that for over a month had been reigning in Petersburg seemed almost to reach its climax. From early morning the sun blazed through a copper-coloured haze, the river was like molten lead with an oily reflection on its absolute stillness. The little white passenger steamers passing to and fro hardly made a ripple on the smooth surface, even the fussy black tugs dragging the heavy, painted barges seemed oppressed by the weight of the air that was heavy with the stinging scent of smoke from the forest fires raging in Finland and in all the surrounding districts of the town. On the Fortress the flag hung limp and dead, not a leaf stirred on the great trees in the Summer Garden, the few children on the broad shady walks tried weakly to play their usual games, only now and then to burst into fretful crying.

Out at Krassnoe the Emperor was holding the big summer review of the troops, and all the sun-baked

arid plain was a mass of marching figures with only the magenta shirts of the Tirailleurs de la Garde and the scarlet-lined cloaks of the Imperial convoy of Cossacks to make a splash of colour amidst the universal khaki-coloured sameness.

And as the day wore on the heat in the town grew more and more oppressive. The burning pavements seemed to scorch the feet, the walls of the houses seemed like furnaces. Hardly a cab was to be seen; now and then a tram-bell clanged harshly and the yellow cars, nearly always empty, swung noisily across the bridge. Early in the afternoon a cart-horse dragging sacks of flour had fallen down dead; and till late in the evening a long line of carts still stood on the square, while the weary horses struggled vainly to drag the heavy loads up the steep incline of the bridge.

Slowly the sun sank into the cloud of smoke in the west, the river lay like a streak of copper, while the bridge spanning it seemed a colossal shadow amidst the deepening mist.

Sitting at my window after dinner that evening I tried in vain to get a little breath of freshness, tried also in vain to fight against the sense of oppression that seemed to lie so heavily on everything. What this fear and dread was I could not say. It was true that there were serious strikes

in the town, that a director of one of the big factories had been shot by a workman, that Cossacks were quartered in many districts, that in some places there had been shooting, that the windows of a tram had been broken. But it was something far more stupendous and vast that seemed to hover like an evil spirit on the horizon. It may seem, of course, an easy thing to say after all these years, but looking back across many things that have since become blurred and indistinct, I have such a very clear recollection of that stifling summer evening, of that still, turbid river, of the opal-coloured sky and the indefinable choking smell of smoke.

And presently as I sat there, too weary even to turn on a light, there came out of the stillness the dull, far-away sound of horses' feet on the hard wood pavement. The trams on the bridge had stopped, the few couples walking slowly along the Quay paused, and turned to look in the direction of that ever approaching sound.

Nearer it came and nearer, and, bending out of the window I saw them at last, rank upon rank of horsemen with long lances against the sky; gray, ghostly figures in the twilight! And now they were passing beneath the windows, and I recognised them to be the regiment of the Chevaliers Gardes and felt again a little throb of

fear. For I knew they were quartered out at Krassnoe for another month, and it must surely be something very grave that called them up to town so suddenly.

On and on they came, weary horses and weary, dust-stained riders—dim and unreal as the mists from which they came, or the mists that swallowed them and left of their transient passing nothing but the echo of their horses' feet on the baking pavements. One of them—a boy I had danced with often in the winter season—looked up as he rode by, and catching, I suppose, a glimpse of my white gown at the window, raised his hand in greeting and called out a laughing good-night. Was it a premonition of coming evil, or why, as I bent forward to watch his passing, did sudden tears choke my throat? The twilight haze had swallowed him and his comrades, a shadowy army —whence had they come and what was to be the end of their day's march?

Through the silver dusk we drove up the Quay to a dance given on board a yacht belonging to some Americans who were cruising in the Baltic. The great topics of conversation were the strikes and the calling up of the first Guard regiments to the capital. And through the ragtime music I seemed always to hear the echo of horses' feet on the hard pavements, and always through the

shadows I seemed to see those dim figures passing on to some unknown and distant goal.

The next morning Austria's ultimatum to Servia woke the world from its dream of an idle summer. And scarcely three weeks later the boy who had called up that laughing good-night was shot through the head by a wounded German he had bent to help on one of the battle-fields in Eastern Prussia.

III

DECLARATION OF WAR

THE days of the following week have become blurred and dim in my mind. One seemed to live in a constant state of strained expectancy, at one moment filled with hope, daring to believe that war would be averted, at the next crushed by the certainty that it was inevitable.

On the Tuesday Count Pourtalés, the German Ambassador, lunched with us, and I can well remember his hurried, nervous manner, his quick movements of denial when my father warned him that Germany would lead the world into the most terrible war of history if she did not change her attitude. War was the last thing Germany wanted, and war with England was out of the question. His words were emphatic, his voice had an almost hysterical insistence, and there was a very real look of trouble in his pale blue eyes when at last he said good-bye to my father and went slowly from the room.

That evening, the situation seeming a little

more hopeful, I went down to Peterhof to stay with a friend. There in the coolness and quiet the weight of dread seemed lifted, and the thought of anything so stupendous as a world war seemed impossible. We lived in a little wooden house in the middle of the Park, and, being just four women alone, scarcely saw any one or heard any news except the contradictory reports in the papers.

On the Friday afternoon, feeling too restless to be away from the centre of things any longer, I went back to Petersburg. The thoughts of a common enemy and a common danger had sunk all ideas of strikes or any sort of internal trouble. Officers were cheered as they drove through the streets, the Emperor's picture was carried in procession round the town, the churches were thronged with people.

On Saturday morning one still clung desperately to the hope that some miracle might even now at the last moment avert the catastrophe. But that afternoon the German Ambassador, arriving at the Foreign Office, handed the Declaration of War to Monsieur Sazonoff and then turned away to the window, shaken by a storm of tears.

The same evening Monsieur Sazonoff, the French Ambassador, the Greek Minister and his wife, and one or two other men were dining with us.

Ordinary conversation was quite out of the question; there was only one topic, and that nobody yet seemed able to grasp—it seemed so impossible to believe that it was really an accomplished fact.

My father had to leave in the middle of dinner to motor down to Czarskoe for a special audience with the Emperor. Four times during the evening Monsieur Sazonoff was called away; the bell of the telephone pealed incessantly, the square outside was a dense crowd of people singing the National Anthem. Till late on in the night crowds besieged the doors of the Embassy cheering for the British Fleet, and always asking the same question: Would England help, would England join with them? My father, returning after midnight, could hardly drive up to the door. The motor was surrounded by a cheering multitude of soldiers, officers, workmen, and well-dressed women; eager hands were held out to him, questions poured in on every side.

The next day all the officers of the garrison assembled in the Winter Palace, and after a solemn service in the Royal Chapel the Emperor came out on to the balcony and announced to the huge crowd assembled on the Square the Declaration of War.

All during the next two days crowds thronged

to the Embassy carrying French, Russian, and English flags, waiting patiently for my father to appear. Every moment the telephone bell rang and anxious voices inquired whether we had not yet had any definite news.

Once the report spread that England had declared war, and almost at once an enormous crowd assembled before the door and would hardly listen to my father's message that as yet we had no official confirmation of the news. It was written up in the town, they said; it must be true. And it was said that all the British Fleet had been ordered out to sea. They were sure England would not desert them.

A little later that same afternoon the servant came to tell me that somebody wanted to see me, and going downstairs I found a dark-haired, gentle-faced woman waiting, holding by either hand a little boy and girl. In broken English she asked me to excuse her, but they had heard that England had thrown in her lot with Russia and nothing would satisfy her children but to bring me some flowers in token of their admiration and gratitude.

Such a small, pathetic bunch of flowers it was, with a card tied on with blue ribbon, and the inscription written in a round childish hand, 'From Mimi and Petia.'

As I bent to kiss the little dark-eyed girl I had

a sudden choke in my throat, and felt somehow rather small as I had to acknowledge that we had not yet had the telegram from England, but that I thanked them very much and felt quite sure that England would come in and that together we should beat the Germans.

And all the time quietly, steadily, unceasingly, the soldiers were leaving for the front. There was no ostentation and show about any of those departures, no flags or blaring military bands, and very little cheering. Only in the early mornings long lines of khaki-clad figures marching away with grim, set faces and unwavering eyes, and sometimes tramping beside them a woman with a shawl over her head and a child held in her tired, patient arms, a woman whose eyes had shed so many tears that now when the final moment had come they had no tears left to shed, could only stare out in front of them facing the emptiness of all the future days with the weary, hopeless apathy of despair.

And then at last at five o'clock on the Wednesday morning one of the secretaries came into my father's room to tell him that the telegram we had been waiting for had come, the telegram that said in so few words such tremendous tidings, 'WAR GERMANY ACT.'

When I telephoned to a Russian friend early

that morning before the news had become public property, she answered my call in a flat, tired voice, then when she heard what I had to say burst into a storm of hysterical tears.

A little later in the morning I went with another friend to write down my name for a course of first aid training in one of the big Russian hospitals. The sister who received us looked us over curtly. There was no vacancy at present. We must wait six weeks for the next course. 'Oh, but, please'—I felt that six weeks of inactivity was not possible—'I am English, and we have just heard that England has declared war on Germany; can't you make an exception?'

Her face changed instantly. 'You are English? I will ask Baroness Wrangel, who is the superior of our hospital, what can be done. Will you give me your name, please?' She disappeared, and the line of other girls waiting their turn glowered at us somewhat resentfully.

Within two minutes the sister returned. 'Will you please come,' she said; 'the superior would like to speak with you herself.' She led the way down a narrow passage and ushered us into a big, dark room where we were received by an old lady with a pale, worn face, made all the more spiritual by her nun-like head-dress and dark brown robe. 'You are the daughter of the British Ambassador.'

She held out her thin white hand, her voice quivering with anxiety, 'Tell me—you have had news?'

I had heard the question so often before, this time I was able to answer freely that we had had the official telegram and that England was at war with Germany.

'God be praised!' The white, trembling fingers made the sign of the Cross, the tired, faded eyes filled with sudden tears. After that everything was easy, and we left the hospital with our names written down, having promised to come and begin work the next morning.

IV

MOSCOW

ON August 23 of that summer, 1914, the Emperor went down to Moscow to carry out the tradition of celebrating a solemn service praying for victory, in the Uspensky Cathedral; and the French Ambassador, my father, my mother, and myself were asked to be present.

We arrived after a night's journey at about seven in the morning and drove through gray, narrow, tortuous streets to the hotel. A light, filmy blue sky, trees just turning yellow, and all the wonder of gilded spires and jewelled domes made Moscow seem a dream city held in the spell of some golden enchantment. Flags fluttered and waved from every balcony and window, the pavements were crowded by people who were all hurrying in the same direction, whose faces all had the same expression of a tense, restrained emotion. A sense of expectancy seemed to hover over everything, even the commonplace, comfortably modern hotel was invested with the feeling of

something unusual; waiters and maids spoke to each other in whispers, officers hurried to and fro with a subdued jingle of spurs to mark their passing, and now and then a court official blazing with decorations made his way downstairs.

A little after ten we drove up the crowded street and under the big arch of one of the Kremlin gates. And here, even more than in the town, one felt that hush of listening, breathless silence, as if the world were standing on tiptoe, athrill with some great excitement. The rose-flushed walls with their round and crooked, square and painted towers—it is useless to try and describe their wonder—the spell of dead centuries and battle and fire and splendour that is theirs. The spires and domes, silver and blue and green and gold, the white magnificence of the modern palace, the marvellous intricacy of the Church of St Basil, the solemn gray splendour of the Uspensky Cathedral, the dim, red walls of the ancient palace; surely no castle of legend history was ever so beautiful!

Driving across the enormous space of the Red Square we passed under yet another arch, and then through courtyard after courtyard, till we drew up at last at one of the palace doors. Led through a bewildering maze of long passages and huge, empty rooms, we were left in a great, gilded hall

where a little knot of ladies-in-waiting and much-beribboned officials stood like a small island in the middle of some vast sea.

For a long time we waited there, speaking mostly in whispers, held by I don't know what sense of awe. On the sill outside the great glass windows a pigeon was preening its feathers, the sun blazed in a cloudless sky and made of the golden domes of the little white church just opposite a dazzling splendour one's eyes could hardly bear.

At either end of the long room high doors studded with bronze and gold remained fast closed; beyond them and outside the tight shut windows one felt rather than heard the distant murmur of voices, the stir of a multitude of people like the subdued beating of some great human heart.

Then the doors at the farther end swung noiselessly open and a little gasp came from the group of waiting people. But it was only a gray-haired chamberlain, covered with gold lace and ablaze with many decorations, who came out, closing the doors gently behind him. Slowly, majestically, he passed down the length of the long room, the tapping of his white and gold stick the only sound in the stillness. And silently the doors at the other end of the room opened to receive him, and as silently closed behind him, leaving us to our patient waiting.

Two or three officers grouped together talked in low voices about a rumoured skirmish of troops in Eastern Prussia, and a white-haired old lady, wife of the director of the palace, who stood next to me, told me in whispers how she had witnessed the coronation of the present Emperor's father.

Then a sudden hush, a stir in the farther room, the doors swung open again by a negro servant in crimson and gold. Slowly, amidst a silence that was only broken by the rustle of women's dresses, the Emperor and Empress passed, followed by the young Grand Duchesses, and the little Heir Apparent, carried in the arms of an enormous Cossack of the Imperial Convoy. A little group of chamberlains and gentlemen-in-waiting came after, and paused to make way for my father and the French Ambassador, while my mother and the Mistress of Robes followed. The little old lady on my left laid a frail, trembling hand on my arm. 'Come,' she whispered, her blue eyes full of a mist of tears. 'We have to go with them; you are to walk with me.'

The doors had swung open, giving access to yet another room, and beyond that to an enormous hall where a waiting crowd of officers, town officials, and police dignitaries with their wives and families were assembled. The silence was broken by a swelling burst of cheers as the Emperor passed

through; the dense throng of people joining up behind us, making one enormous procession.

Through hall after hall, passage after passage, we passed, and now, leaving the modern part of the palace, we came to low-ceilinged rooms, painted with dim old mosaics, and wonderful burnished gold.

And then suddenly wide open doors giving out on to a terrace, and the wonderful stone flight of steps known as the Red Staircase, and all the square below as far as eye could reach a vast concord of people! A crowd that thronged up the steps of the surrounding churches, that stretched away to the encircling walls of the palaces, that filled up all the corners between the sacristy and the distant rose-red monastery, leaving in the midst of all that seething darkness one narrow pathway, raised just a foot's space from the ground, covered with a strip of crimson carpet.

And when the Emperor appeared on the top of the long flight of stairs, as if at some unspoken signal, all that great crowd, workmen and citizens, merchants and peasants, soldiers, women and children went down on their knees, and from them rose a sound that broke against the ancient walls like the waves of a tremendous sea, that echoed and re-echoed, swelled, died down, and burst out again. For some of them were cheering, some

were sobbing, some—with streaming eyes fixed on that small majestic figure descending the great stairs—were singing the National Anthem, the hymn for the Sovereign's safety.

Slowly between that kneeling throng of people, the Emperor passed, so near that by stretching out a hand those close to the pathway kept for him could have touched him. And there was nobody to guard that path, no policeman or soldier with fixed bayonet to keep back that seething, overwhelming mass of people.

By now nearly all the crowd were singing the National Anthem, singing it in broken, faltering voices, with tears choking their utterance, while here a woman lifted a child up in her arms, there a soldier bent his head low over his clasped hands as if he dared not look, and an old woman near the pathway bent to kiss the ground as the Emperor passed.

Then, after that glare of sunlight, after that swelling roar of sound came the dusky golden shadow of the old cathedral, and as the great doors swung to behind us a sudden startling silence.

The vast nave seemed a living casket of jewels —dim, old mosaics on the walls, carpets of wonderful, faded colours stretched on the cold, stone floors, jewelled ikons priceless in workmanship, little points of candlelight catching the reflection of

some precious stone, making it burn with hidden fire. And golden and yellow, black and silver, deep purple and glowing crimson, the sheen and shimmer of the priests' cloaks, and all pale blue and gold the stiff, high-collared robes of the choir!

The little old lady on my left clung on to my arm crying silently; on my right a woman with the crimson order of St Katherine on her breast stood with a pale, set face, the tears running unheeded down her cheeks.

And then, breaking the hush, the deep low voice of one of the silver-haired priests chanting the beginning of the service, and rising above it, silver clear, unbelievably pure, the young fresh voices of the choir.

A long shaft of sunlight streamed through one of the high glass windows, it glanced across the figure of an old, bent chamberlain, woke to glowing colours the corner of a priest's brocaded cloak, and fell on the fair hair of one of the boys in the choir, making of that young face, framed by the high, jewelled collar, the face of an angel in some old picture.

Up by the golden doors leading to the altar a mass of burning candles made a blaze of orange light amidst the blue haze of incense smoke. And as the dense crowd swayed and shifted, one caught now and then a glimpse of the Emperor's motionless

figure, of the huge, bearded Cossack bearing the frail form of the little pale-faced boy, of the Empress's hard, set features, of the wonderful spiritual figure of her sister, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, clad in the straight white robes of a nun.

On and on went the glorious service, the marvellous music of those boys' voices, falling now to the low, passionate note of an organ, rising now clear and high in the triumph of youth and perfect training.

And then in a sudden hush the rustling of women's dresses as they fell on their knees, here and there the sharp rattle of a sword striking the stone floor, and then in the deep silence above that kneeling multitude the low, deep voice of a gray-haired priest, his trembling hands raised in supplication, his face very pale beneath the weight of his wonderful jewelled crown. A prayer for victory, for strength, for unity, for patience and endurance; a prayer for the arms of Russia and her allies; a prayer for the fulfilment of the world's liberty, and for an ultimate glorious peace.

The beautiful old voice died away, and in the silence that followed a muffled sobbing was the only sound. Then as in a jubilation the clear young voices of the choir breaking out again and a burst of dazzling sunshine as the great doors swung open.

Once more the long procession formed, and as the Emperor left the church a great roar of cheering broke out from the patiently waiting crowd, and high above it against the soft blue sky the mighty clamour of the bells—silver bells that laughed and rippled, great bronze bells that cried a solemn warning to the idle world, golden bells that seemed to call to prayer.

And between that tempest of sound, the hurricane of cheering, that thunder of bells, the Emperor passed out and the dim old church sunk back to its dreams of long dead magnificence, while the walls of the Kremlin echoed and re-echoed to that tumultuous cheering that beat itself out against their strength and died at last to silence.

V

FIRST DAYS AT THE HOSPITAL

For six weeks after the Declaration of War my friend and I went every morning to the big yellow Hospital of St George. I don't think I shall ever forget the first morning, when Baroness Wrangel, leading us through dim corridors, brought us to the ambulance ward where we were to start work, and introduced us to the sister in charge.

It was a big, light room divided into two separate partitions for men and women. High glass windows gave out into the walled-in, untidy courtyard of the hospital; low wooden benches stood against the walls and all down the centre of the room. At one end stood a plain deal table with instruments and a big metal dish of boiling water, on another table stood jars of ointments and ligaments and big cases of bandages.

And on all the wooden benches a crowd of men, women, children, babies; a throng of humanity, poor, dirty, suffering, with dumb, patient eyes that watched the sisters come and go, and looked

with terror on all that paraphernalia of instruments, bandages, and medicines which to them meant nothing but torture unknown and terrible, whose healing power they trusted in but could not understand.

At that time I knew hardly a word of Russian; I had never been in a hospital before; I had never seen anything worse than perhaps a cut finger. My first feeling when I stood in the middle of all that suffering was one of sheer, helpless despair, and I think I very nearly just sat down on that stone floor and burst into tears. The sister in charge, however, saved me from disgracing myself in this way by thrusting a bundle of bandages, cotton wool, and a pot of ointment into my hands and telling me to hold them for her while she attended to a man with an abscess in his ear. Not in the least understanding her rapid words, and feeling rather sick and very wobbly about the knees, I stood by her watching her swift, deft fingers, and wondering whether I could ever get used to touching anything so dreadful.

How my friend and I got through that long morning I don't know. I remember vaguely being told to bandage up a man's leg after the sister had dressed his wound. I hadn't the vaguest idea which end of the bandage to use or where to begin. Patiently the sister showed me more by

signs than by words how to proceed, while the man watched me, smiling in amused tolerance at my clumsiness, taking an intense interest in the sister's directions, and not in the least resenting it when I hurt him.

At one o'clock my friend and I tottered weakly home, wondering whether we really could ever continue the work. The next morning I went there with a cold feeling of dread, but having got there very soon forgot all about it, and after a very few mornings we had both got used to the routine and work. Gradually, too, I picked up enough Russian to understand the sister's orders, and to be able to ask for explanations. We all had our favourite patients, and took a sort of pride in doing as much work as we possibly could in the morning.

Twenty people were admitted at a time, and those of us who were free at the moment always stood near the door and took possession of what we thought looked an interesting case. Heads and arms were the chief favourites, and I remember my friend teasing me as, on the first morning when we were shown into that room, I had exclaimed weakly, my eyes fixed on a sister on her knees before a rather particularly filthy old man, 'Oh, I don't mind what I do, but I don't want to have to wash people's dirty feet!' And somehow it nearly always fell to my lot in the *mêlée* when the

doors were opened to be behind-hand, and have to do just what I had said I did not want to do.

Nearly all the patients were workmen from the factories in the neighbourhood, and sometimes a cab-driver, a porter or shopkeeper would be amongst them. Most of them were cases of badly-poisoned abscesses that had been neglected till they swelled to a terrible size or sometimes even gangrene set in. Often, too, we would have accident cases, and I remember one poor old man who tottered in, his hand wrapped in a dirty, blood-stained rag. In between gasps of tears he told the sister how his finger had been cut off in a machine just an hour ago, and then producing a battered old purse, fumbled in it clumsily, and, drawing out a small packet of very dirty newspaper, told us, 'There is my finger. Now, will you please put it on again?' The sister, her voice not quite steady, her kind blue eyes misty between tears and laughter, told him gently that she was afraid that was quite impossible, and the old man broke into sobs, crying bitterly, 'My finger, my finger!'

There was one man with a badly-poisoned hand who always waited for me at the door of the hospital, and refused to let any one else touch him. An old beggar I had often seen in the streets, whose whole leg was a mass of sores, gave me very precise instructions exactly how he wished to be bandaged,

and when I had finished told me that he was very pleased with me, and would I in future always attend to him, as it saved him the trouble of having to explain the somewhat complicated treatment of baths, disinfectants, and ointments that he required. There was a little boy with mischievous blue eyes who had a bad abscess on his heel and brought a baby brother of three with a poisoned finger. That poor little soft, podgy hand was the most difficult thing in the world to bandage, and the elder brother watching one, would make remarks all the time—not always complimentary. The poor little babies were perhaps the most pitiful of all, such miserable, weak, ailing things, who already at such an early age had to learn the penalty of pain, too young perhaps to suffer much, just lying there on their mothers' laps with large, dumb, questioning eyes and tiny hands that beat the air. It was indeed the absolute, silent patience of all those men and women that struck one the most—a childlike faith that however painful the treatment was, it was necessary—and besides that, a most wonderful fortitude and resignation.

Having worked for six weeks in the ambulance ward my friend and I were moved up to a new part of the hospital where there were two wards of ten beds each for soldiers, and two more for officers. Not knowing enough Russian, we could

not go in for the lectures and technical examination, but, having been taught the first principles of bandaging, we had now to learn the ordinary routine of ward work.

I was on duty chiefly in the one ward for soldiers, with the head sister and a younger probationer over me, and there was one soldier there I clearly remember—a huge, fair giant of a man with gentle blue eyes and an angelic smile. He had a big piece of shrapnel in his knee, and besides that had a slight wound on the chest, where the bullet, glancing off a little metal cross he wore on a string round his neck, had just merely grazed the skin. His chief anxiety during his dressing was that his leg should not be too heavy for us to hold, and during all the time the doctor was examining his wound he kept on watching my face with tortured eyes, repeating now and then in a whisper, 'It is too heavy for you, little sister—you will be tired.'

His wife, a stout, well-to-do lady in a tight bottle-green gown, came to see him very often, bringing him sweets in paper bags, apples, and cigarettes. The first time she came after he was brought in I happened to be in the ward, and when she saw him lying in bed she caught hold of my arm in a sudden, helpless burst of tears. 'He is going to die—surely he is going to die,' she sobbed. Raising himself as well as he could, he held out

his hands to her, 'You mustn't cry,' he told her, his own voice shaken by tears; 'you see I am getting much better.'

I was by this time feeling rather like crying myself, so I placed the good lady in a chair by his bed and hurriedly left the ward.

About two weeks later the little hospital started by the British Colony was opened, and a very few days after that the first convoy of wounded was brought in, and leaving the Hospital of St George, my friend and I took up our new work.

Among that first batch of wounded there were two men ill with pneumonia, and though none of the others were seriously hurt, there were several with rather nasty-looking wounds. There was one man in particular whose hand had been shattered by an explosive bullet, and I remember the first time his bandage was being removed, the doctor, who had, I think, not much opinion of volunteer nursing, looked up at me quickly, 'You are not going to be afraid?' he snapped, and evidently not quite believing my reply, stood by me all the time, watching my face with alert, suspicious eyes.

It was this doctor who, speaking French perfectly, examined my friend and me in some of the technical details we had not been able to learn in Russia, and later on passed us as volunteer war nurses.

VI

1915

THE first few weeks of the war the advance of the Russian troops in Eastern Prussia held one enthralled, then came the terrible losses, the retreats, the long, long months of waiting and watching. And now and then to break the gray monotony a little ray of light. The action of Admiral Beatty's Squadron off Heligoland, and the battle of the Dogger Bank, the taking of Lvoff and Przemysl by the Russians. Then a burst of enthusiasm, crowds parading the streets with flags, manifestations in front of the Embassy, speeches, cheering, congratulations. Then silence again and another long, dreary time of waiting, during which slowly, gradually, bit by bit and inch by inch that enthusiasm waned and died away, and the doubts, the questions that had at first been only rare and occasional grew more and more frequent. 'Where is the British Navy? What is the British Army doing? When our soldiers advance over the terrible strongholds of the Carpathian Mountains, when

they are beaten back, when they are killed in hundreds and thousands and ten thousands, what are the English soldiers doing sitting in their trenches?'

Questions very hard to endure in patience, very hard to answer when the questioners would not understand or try to see the reason and logic in our reply.

And during all those long, long months the hospital was always full, the endless routine of work went on. And there were storms and times of calm, and many, many wounded who came and went. And sometimes a soldier died, and the men's footsteps in the wide, light passages were hushed, and there would be a service in the little wooden chapel at the back of the garden, candles burning, an open coffin, a tortured face at peace. And sometimes there were feast days when the hospital buzzed like a hive, and the soldiers had butter on their bread and huge spoonfuls of jam in their tea—as is the invariable custom of Russian soldiers, who put everything one gives them into the beloved cup of tea, from oranges, lemons or apples down to jam and sweets. And in the sisters' room, with its English chintzes and pink curtains, all signs of work were put away, and perhaps there would be some flowers or a chocolate cake on the tea table. And Sister Anna walked

about in a brown silk gown and a big gold cross hung on a broad blue ribbon round her neck, and beamed on everybody and forgot to scold.

Poor Sister Anna, with her kind, yellow, wrinkled face, her rigorous fasting, her strict religious principles which made her sometimes send a soldier barely strong enough to sit up in bed, to stand during a long hour's service in church. I remember also how one day when we were all being rather frivolous at luncheon, she turned on us and told us it was a sin to talk so much during meals. That food was given us from Heaven and consequently must be eaten in silence and gravity. One of us ventured to suggest that after all laughter was also a gift of God, but she would not hear of that, and insinuated that it came from the devil, and consequently was not to be encouraged under any circumstances.

And during all those days of work the Russian soldiers held their places in our hearts. Patient, uncomplaining, gentle as children, they lay there in the quiet blue and white wards with tired, suffering eyes that welcomed one's coming always with a smile. 'It is nothing, little sister,' that was the invariable answer when one asked them how they were. And with the knowledge of all that has come after, with the picture of the Russian soldier as I saw him last before my eyes, I can still, looking back across the years, see those other figures that

I knew before. Petroff, who was one of the first patients we had, who died after he had been in the hospital two days, whose poor pale lips never told us the secret that seemed to haunt him through the shadows of his delirium when he called out desperately, 'Let me go—I tell you this isn't my battery—I know it isn't. Give me back my clothes and let me go.' Firschenko, who had to have a desperate operation eight hours after he had been brought into us, whose wide, gray, childish eyes gave me one wild appealing glance as the doctor put the mask over his face, who during the long hours of untold agony after that operation lay in patient silence clinging on to my hand, and when at last late in the evening I rose to go, whispered huskily, 'Thank you—God bless you, little sister.' Pavloff, the boy with the golden curls and the dark blue eyes, who, shot through the lungs and paralysed as well, lay there for months growing every day weaker, thinner, paler, suffering more and more intensely, always with that patient tragic smile in his eyes, the husky tired voice that whispered so pathetically, 'If only I was not in such pain how comfortable I should be, with so many people looking after me. Just as if I was a gentleman.' Sokoloff, gentle, low-voiced, always smiling, whose leg had been so badly amputated in some field hospital that he had to have several

more operations and was with us for nearly a year. And not once during all that time did he complain, and whatever he might be suffering, there was always the same sweet smile to answer one's question, 'Oh, it is better, little sister—it is much better.' Vakahoff, desperately badly wounded and dying of inflammation of the lungs, his soft brown eyes wistful with the shadow of death, who late one evening when, already in my outdoor things, I looked into the ward to say good-night to the head sister, called me up to his bed and pulled down my muff to his cheek: 'So soft,' he whispered hoarsely, and still holding on to it fell asleep.

There are many others whose patient, suffering eyes look at me out of the shadows of those times, whose faint voices call to me, whispering that they fought and gave of their best—youth and strength, and soundness of limb and life itself. Where have they gone now, and living or dead, what are their thoughts?

And all through those summer months the Germans advanced and, fighting steadily, inch by inch, the Russians retreated, and as they retreated hordes of refugees flooded Petrograd—men, women, and children, housed in filthy wooden barracks, dying of dirt and disease and want, herded together indiscriminately.

Pitiful stories they had to tell. Here a small baby whose mother had died or been lost on the way; here a woman distraught and wild seeking everywhere for a little girl of three years old whose fate no one knew; here an old man, broken, helpless, half blind, whose wife and daughter had both died during that terrible retreat.

A feeding point, where the English ladies took it in turn to be on duty and hand out soup and bread, was quickly started, then a lost baby home where some of those nameless little ones were fed and clothed and cared for, and a maternity home where the mothers were tended and nursed by English sisters.

The short gray days of autumn grew ever shorter and grayer; the coldest winter we had had for many years held Petrograd in snowbound, icy quiet. There were no cheering crowds about the streets now, no flags carried round in triumph. Only silent throngs on the Nevsky Prospect reading the telegrams posted in the windows, and already everywhere those long lines of patient women waiting through slush and snow and bitter cold for bread and milk and meat.

VII

THE SECOND WINTER

It seemed sometimes as if that long winter of 1915-1916 would never end. Looking back at my diary I find long gaps between the days, and then just a sentence perhaps: 'Nothing new.—Colder than ever.—The hot-water pipes near the dining-room have burst and we now have our meals either in my father's study or the little ante-room.—It's been snowing again.'

In many of the houses the central heating would not work with wood, and the shortage of coal was already beginning to make itself felt. People sat and shivered in their fur coats or tried to get a little heat from badly burning oil-stoves. In the hospital the big wards could hardly be kept warm; the soldiers lay covered up under a multitude of blankets and patch-work quilts. Sister Anna walked about in a gray woollen shawl, her yellow, wrinkled face enframed in her nun-like head-dress, a little more wrinkled, her temper a little more trying.

Down by the Warsaw station the suffering among the refugees increased. The wooden sheds could not hold the ever-increasing numbers. Hundreds of men, women, and children were housed in filthy cellars which could not be heated. Many of the children had nothing but little cotton frocks; nearly all of them had no shoes. Most of the babies died of cold and want of proper care. A clothing fund was started, and once a week the names, numbers, and ages of about sixty or seventy families were written down. Then the various bundles of frocks, shirts, and petticoats were made up at the Embassy and given out at the feeding point on Saturday morning. A great many of these little dresses were made at the weekly sewing party, but bundles of old clothes were also sent to the Embassy and sorted out and distributed in the various parcels. Two or three of the English ladies came once a week to help in the sorting and packing, and the room resembled nothing more than an old rag-market. Every kind of garment was on view there, from old battered straw hats to babies' socks, and warm woollen jerseys, old cloaks, shawls, stockings, and petticoats. How tired we used to get by the time we got beyond the fortieth parcel. I remember the viciousness I sometimes felt when my mother's secretary read out the names from her big account

book: 'Proskovia Platnin—one girl of twelve, one boy ten, one girl eight, three boys—six, four, three, baby eight months old.' Really, people ought not to have so many children, and there aren't enough boys' shirts. Must each of them have a pair of woollen stockings——?

One day a week also we had the loan of one of the military bath trains, and several of the English ladies themselves undertook the bathing and dressing of the babies and smaller children. I went down on one of my free days from the hospital and rather enjoyed drying the little wet, clean bodies, until a friend who had come there with me came up to me very pink after her exertions of scrubbing a small boy of five. 'Meriel, his head was absolutely alive,' she said with a little gasp. I had at that moment got an angelically pretty child on my knee, whose hair clustered in delicious golden curls all over her head. Carefully I rubbed it with the clean towel I held in my hand, and when I looked at it discovered that my friend had been only too right, and immediately began to feel myself itch all over, and I remember that I had a very hot bath when I went home late that evening.

The hospital took up nearly all my days, and I very seldom had time to go down to the feeding point, and I can only say that the English ladies who worked there steadily for nearly a year have

all my admiration, as for the most part it was rather a thankless task, and exceedingly tiring, as well as entailing a constant risk of infection of all kinds. I can remember very distinctly that long, low wooden shed, the steam of damp and heat on the windows, the two huge cauldrons of boiling soup, the big baskets filled with great pieces of black bread; and the crowd—old men, women, children, dressed in the oddest assortment of clothes, shuffling, pushing, jostling each other; eager, trembling hands outstretched for their basin of soup, querulous voices asking for just a little more, begging for a bottle of milk to take home to a dying baby, telling long, rambling, pitiful stories of want and misery and cold.

Whether it came from the refugees or not, I don't know, but I remember it was this winter that there was a perfect epidemic of measles, both German and otherwise. Every family in the British colony had it, and then, one after the other, the whole Embassy succumbed to it. If it had not been rather trying it really would have been very comic. The care with which we examined ourselves, the dismay with which we perceived anything approaching a spot on our noses. I was one of the last victims, but I don't think I was very much to be pitied, and I think I really rather enjoyed the enforced rest and laziness.

Looking back at my diary I see that it was this winter also that I met General Polivanoff, the new Minister of War. 'We dined yesterday evening with the Sazonoffs, and I sat next to Polivanoff. Politically I know really nothing about him, but personally I immediately took a great sympathy to him. He is one of those grand old Russians, enormously tall, with a wonderfully commanding, imposing presence. A rugged face framed in a short, dark beard, and deep-set gray eyes, keen and very bright and yet unspeakably kind. He asked me all about the hospital and my work, and when I said I loved the soldiers, beamed on me delightedly, and promised me very soon to come and visit them himself.'

I think I hardly expected him to keep his promise or remember anything about me, but two days later his secretary telephoned to me saying that fifteen places had been reserved at a special performance at the People's Palace and would I bring some of the soldiers from the British Hospital. I was unfortunately unable to go with them myself, but one of the other sisters took them, and the next morning the soldiers, who I'm afraid were not quite devoid of snobbishness, told me with delight and pride how after the performance an officer had come up and asked which were the soldiers from the British Colony Hospital, and

how then the Minister of War had sent for them and talked to every one of them in turn, and how the soldiers from all the other hospitals had looked on in envy.

About ten days later also General Polivanoff drove all the way out to our hospital, and his kindness, the wonderful charm of his manner, the ease with which he seemed to find the right thing to say to each individual man, as if for each one he had a special interest, made his visit stand out a red-letter day in the soldiers' memory.

A patriot and an honest man, he spent himself heart and soul in an endeavour to retrieve the fatal mistakes of the past. The terrible lack of ammunition that had led to disaster after disaster, the awful waste of human life, the bad generalship, the bribery, treachery, and intrigue, it all surrounded him like a web which he tried in vain to break and sunder, while the kind eyes, seeing the suffering of the soldiers he looked on as his children, grew tired and sad, the broad shoulders a little bent under the weight of care.

VIII

THE CRIMEA

THE end of February, 1916, my father, who had been ill off and on during all the winter, was given three weeks' leave to go to the Crimea. We left Petrograd with snow-bound streets, with the thick mass of ice still blocking the river, though here and there great cracks showed a gleam of water, dark and still, beneath the frozen whiteness. A special saloon carriage had been given us, and we travelled in the greatest ease and comfort. And slowly, gradually during those four days we left winter behind us, though the spring we found was but a gray, dim ghost of bleak grass and leafless trees. All the last day it rained, and the country showed nothing but miles and endless miles of bare brown fields, a few straggling birch trees, a yellow river, some wretched green-roofed villages. Waking the next morning was like coming suddenly into Fairyland—a flood of sunshine, a sea bluer than anything one can imagine or had ever dreamt of, here and there fruit trees in full blossom, a town

perched on the top of a brown rock like some old citadel of Italy.

We spent a day and a night in the quaint little town of Sebastopol, with its steep, narrow streets, its wide, blue harbour, where the great gray battleships lay at anchor, and its French and English cemeteries, where the graves of those soldiers who had fallen so far from their own country were covered all the year round with flowers.

Amidst so many new impressions, all jostling each other in my mind, I find it hard to remember each thing clearly, but just one or two things stand out as vividly as if I had seen them only yesterday. The little white green-roofed monastery of St George—the wonderful brown and amber rocks that dropped down into a sea so blue that it made one catch one's breath in almost physical pain. Through the dark doorway of the French church an almond tree in full blossom against the deep blue of the bay, and the sound of a bugle rising small and clear from one of the distant battleships. And Balaclava—who having once seen Balaclava could ever forget it? The narrow green valley where the Light Brigade charged the Russian guns, and on the right the little bay, blue as a fallen aquamarine, closed in by towering rocks. Behind the one street along the shore pink and white houses that straggled up the hill-side in no definite

order or sequence, and high above them the red brown ruins of a fortress built by the men of Genoa thousands of years ago.

So still it was that one hardly dared to speak above a whisper; not a ripple broke the surface of the water, smooth as a sheet of glass. An old Tartar, with a face burnt almost black, smiled at us from a dark doorway; two or three little boys played at some mysterious, silent game close by the water's edge. Then, climbing the narrow track up the hill, we came with almost startling suddenness upon the open sea, and met a rush of intoxicating air. Far below us the waves whispered together as they broke in foaming whiteness at the feet of the huge brown rocks. Above our heads masses of black and white gulls wheeled and circled, watching us with restless, yellow eyes. At the very edge of the cliff a sailor sat on guard in a wooden shed, and farther up the cliff a soldier stood, leaning on his gun, gazing out to sea with steady, unblinking eyes. Turning away at last we went back down the rough-hewn path, the sound of the sea dying to a whisper behind us, the bay below us and the tiny pink and white houses seeming held in an enchanted spell of eternal silence.

The next day, having been lent motors by the Governor of Sebastopol, we started on the three hours' drive to Yalta—a drive that led one for the

first hour across the plain, where here and there a monument marked the spot of some ancient battle-field, and then on through valleys and golden hills, till mounting ever higher we came out through an old gray gateway miles and miles above the sea.

On and on went the road, round interminable corners, through little crowded Tartar villages, past great white villas and low houses with stone-walled gardens and baby cypress trees. The driver of the motor I was in was a sailor of the Black Sea Fleet, who entertained me with a stream of conversation, whisked me round corners, and incidentally ran the motor into one of the little open Tartar carriages that tail up and down the road, dragged by tired ponies with blue harness. Having extricated ourselves amidst a chorus of shrieks and curses with no further harm than a broken mud-guard, we sped on again down the winding, twisting road till we came slowly to the level of the sea, and through the noisy, crowded street to the hotel.

We stayed for a fortnight at Yalta—a white town huddled untidily along the shore, a quay crowded with over-dressed women, rich bankers from Moscow or Kieff, gaily dressed nurses and babies, and in between them a painted Tartar cart, a group of brown-faced peasants, here and there

a solemn Oriental child with stiff braids of hair under her high, gold cap, and great, sombre vacant eyes staring out of a round, brown face.

And behind all the bizarre mixture of Europe and the East the hills rose in wild beauty, miles upon miles of forests filled with a marvel of wild flowers of all kinds, great, swaying pine trees with rose-flushed, amber trunks, gray rocks that towered up into the clouds. And in their walled-in gardens great white palaces stood in silent majesty, and always there was the marvel of that sea—high up in the forests a glimpse of vivid blue between the trees—from the gardens of Livadia a sheet of turquoise above a glowing bed of tulips; in the bay of Ghurzuf huge waves that broke against the grim, brown rocks.

That time in Yalta seems just a dream of lazy golden days, of drives through the whispering solitude of the woods, a visit to some wonderful palace in the midst of an enchanted garden, a rambling walk amongst the low brown hills and through strange, half-savage Tartar villages.

Then at last the day came to leave, and there was the long drive up the mountain, through the dark mystery of pine forests, with the blue of the sea sinking ever farther and farther away into a dim, dreamlike distance, till at last, crossing the bleak summit of Aic Petri, where patches of snow

still lingered, we began the descent on the other side into the green, fruitful valley.

We stayed to luncheon at the wonderful little Tartar palace of Prince Yusupoff, set in mosaics of dim greens and blues in the middle of a fairy orchard of flowering apple trees. Above the wonderful mass of rose-tipped blossoms the blue of the sky, and nothing to break the stillness but the song of innumerable birds. It seemed a little bit cut out of the *Arabian Nights*, and the Tartar village huddled outside the walls, the crowd of dark-eyed, brown-faced peasants, the mosque with its slender minaret only added to that sense of some magic spell of unreality that surrounded it.

Reluctantly we tore ourselves away and drove across a baking, golden plain to the ancient Tartar capital of Bakschi Serail, with its perfect old palace of rose-red walls. We were received here with great pomp and ceremony by the mayor and the governor and many other solemn Tartar dignitaries, were driven out to a dead city of some old religious sect, were pursued through the ruins by a barbaric Tartar band, and in a vault-like hall given strange and wonderful things to eat—rose-leaf jam, hot honey cakes, and some delicious stuff like Devonshire cream. Then after a dinner in the old palace of Bakschi Serail we were taken to a mosque to see a sect of dervishes—strange, turbaned figures,

sitting in a ring on the floor, swaying backwards and forwards, ever faster and faster, their voices rising to a scream that echoed weirdly in the empty shadows.

Then at last, in the blue darkness of the hot, still night, we drove through the narrow, winding streets to the small, crowded station, where the train and our special carriage waited for us; and so left behind us all the heat and colour of the East, arriving back to find Petrograd gray under a gray, bleak sky, half-drowned in a sea of slowly melting snow and slush.

IX

SUMMER, 1916

IT was a gray and rainy summer, with just one fortnight of hot weather; when the long days passed in cloudless splendour, followed by evenings of magic; when out on the islands the trees stood shrouded in mystery against the tender, opal sky, and across the water, smooth as glass, the green-painted boats stole to and fro like silent shadows. And up above the trees, where the faint gold of the sunset faded into palest green, and so to blue, hung a young, young moon whose primrose pallor was just touched with rose. And in the phantom, silver-gray shadows a crowd that laughed and talked and whispered, and carriages and motors and tumble-down cabs that passed up and down, and round and round in an endless circle till the light faded to a ghastly, shadowed dawn.

Sometimes on those summer evenings we went out in a little steam launch belonging to the Minister of Marine's state yacht, and, passing by the crowded islands, steamed out into the Gulf of Finland.

Behind the line of the coast the sky burned all dull rose, and as the wind freshened the smoothness of the water was broken into little choppy waves of opal-tinted gray that broke over the bows in clouds of spray. Then, at about eleven we turned homewards, and before us the towers of the town glimmered faintly, with here and there on some spire or dome a flash of gold. And coming out of the shadows behind us, a seaplane passed close over our heads, turned, and wheeled, and then came swooping down on us, the sudden stopping of the engines making a silence that caught one's breath, till the great wings met the water, and with a roar the engines started again, sending the bird-like, fish-like marvel forward in a rush of speed that left us far behind.

But already at the end of that brief fortnight the evenings began to draw in. When we turned back towards the town, the moon, all her slim, pale youthfulness forgotten, swung a great ball of copper in the faint mauve mist. And as we steamed on the light on the water died and everywhere the damp lay low in wreaths of ghost-like mist. Ever deeper grew the shadows, and slowly as the moon rose above the clouds she paled to gold, and from some cheap restaurant along the shore a cheap brass band broke the silence with harsh gaiety.

Meanwhile from all sides came the complaints of a people wearied by the war, disillusioned, lost in what seemed an endless circle of mistakes. General Polivanoff had been replaced by a weak, colourless man who did nothing to stem the rising tide of discontent in the army. Monsieur Sazonoff, who had been Minister of Foreign Affairs for close on six years, and whose love for his country and for England had helped to draw the two great nations together, resigned, and his place was taken by Stürmer, the man with the German name and German sympathies.

Food was growing ever scarcer, the queues outside the bread shops stretched right down the length of the streets. It was said in all directions that the merchants and shopkeepers were building up huge profits at the expense of the people. It was whispered that the Empress trafficked with Germans, even the Emperor was no longer held in the same awe and reverence. Rasputin's power at Court seemed to increase every day; his name had become a byword, though many people, held in a kind of superstitious fear, dared not pronounce it, believing that by so doing they brought down ill luck on their heads. 'The Unmentionable'—'The Nameless One,' so they would whisper about him, with nervous glances behind them, as if they feared even then the power of some evil presence.

And still the endless trains of wounded and sick came in. There were advances and retreats, and long periods of almost inaction. The lack of ammunition had been slightly bettered, but still there was not enough, or what there was did not get to the front. Organisation failed, mistakes were made that caused a useless sacrifice of thousands of lives. More and more every day the signs of trouble multiplied, and yet nothing was done to save the inevitable catastrophe.

Hundreds of soldiers escaping from German prisons, enduring innumerable hardships, braving death and torture and hunger, returned to Russia to be herded together in some great barrack without a bed, with hardly enough food, with only one shirt to their back; to be left there for days, sometimes for weeks, while officials discussed what was best to be done, and in discussing forgot them.

They came in hundreds to the Embassy, each of them with the same story to tell. In England, in Denmark, in Sweden even, wherever their wanderings had led them, they had been treated with kindness and consideration, but here in their own country they were received with suspicion, neglected and forgotten. They only wanted to go back to their village, just for a week or even two days, then they asked nothing better but to go back to the front and have a chance of killing a few

Germans. Only not to be left in inaction, in dirt and want and discomfort. It was not for this they had escaped from a German prison, lying hidden all day in a wood with nothing to eat but grass and herbs, walking all through the night across an unknown country of countless perils, or perhaps spending days in some little boat on the sea, not knowing where they were drifting, buffeted by storm and wind and rain. It was not for this they had fought in the early days of the war, without sufficient clothes in the bitter cold, with only perhaps one rifle between ten men. Did we know what that meant? That while one man had that rifle the other nine stood behind him praying that he might soon be killed so that their chance might come to fire a shot. It was not for this that they had lain wounded on those terrible battle-fields, alone and untended, until found and taken prisoner by the Germans. They would fight still for the Little Father, but they wanted to go home first and see their wives and children and the old parents in the village. Was there nothing we could do for them? The English were kind and understood. England was a great country.

It took a long time to get the authorities to do anything, and even then it was only very little, only very slowly that better conditions were made. And meanwhile we gave them shirts and socks

and parcels of clothes to take home when at last they were allowed to go; a shawl or a brightly-coloured handkerchief for their wives, a few little frocks for their children. And that they were grateful was shown by the many letters that came every day to my mother from all parts of Russia. Letters, rather touching in their simple wording, that prayed for all good to come to her in this 'white world,' calling her 'dear giver of gifts,' showing here and there a sudden touch of humour or pathos, giving a human glimpse of those far-off Russian villages. I copy out one or two as illustrations of the simple faith of these untaught peasants who have suffered so much and been led so far astray :—

From the family of a Russian soldier :—'We have the honour humbly to inform you that we have received your presents for Christmas. We put them on, dressed in your new, great mercy. We knelt before the ikon of the Blessed Virgin and gave our hearty thanks to God, and prayed Him that He should return you tenfold for your great mercy to us—a mercy such as we have never seen nor heard of; we did not know there existed people with such great mercy. And when we put on our presents everybody came and wondered at the great miracle that there are such

wonderful people in the world who care for us poor people. Our father has been away all the time and has suffered so much. But the Lord has graciously returned him to us, and then your presents came too; it is all as if the great mercy of God was shining above us. We humbly beg you to tell us your name. If you will find it possible to send us your photograph, please do so. We will put it by the ikon of the Mother of God. We shall pray for you till the end of our days.'

Letter from a soldier's wife :—'I have the honour humbly to thank you for your presents. I have never received such a present ever since I was born, neither from any relations nor from friends. And I never knew there existed such people in the world, who deserve eternal happiness, and who are born, not for themselves, but for the good of the whole nation. And we must all pray to God for you. Up to now I have not heard about England, and thought it was a people like the others; but now when I have received your unexpected present, not only I and my children but everybody ought to give praises and glorify the English people. God send you a long life, and when you die that no bird should take a single little bone from your body.[1] I send you a warm kiss in the air.'

[1] This is a Russian superstition that the ravens pick the bones of wicked people.

Letter from a Russian soldier :—'I inform you that I have brought your presents home. I was met with great joy, and every one asked me where I had got the beautiful clothes from, and I said: "We have a dear mother in Petrograd who looks after us all and helps us." And I told them all in details how we lived in Petrograd and they all cried, but I said: "Don't cry, dear people, we are not forgotten; there are other countries who help us, and these presents are from the English Ambassadress." My wife and all my children and I wish you and our Father the Czar and all our Allies a complete victory over our enemy, who thought there were few men in Russia, but our Father the Czar has many men. Thank God, in a short time I shall be all right again and go once more to the front.—One of the Russian soldiers ever thankful to you.'

A letter from a soldier, Ivan Bardin, from the front :—'I humbly thank you for the help which you have rendered my wife. Your presents my wife received and informed me. How to thank you I do not know. May the guardianship of God be with you in all your ways. Glory be to you and the whole English nation. I cheer your army, from the highest in command to the least of your soldiers. Long life to those of your land who help us poor people. For us Russians it was impossible

to greet the festival of Christmas properly. My wife and little children had hardly anything to wear. Then suddenly the parcel from you arrived, they opened it, fell on their knees and burst into tears before the ikon of the Mother of God, and put up prayers for you—this is what my wife tells me. Please accept a soldier's gratitude, and may the Lord lengthen your life. Pass on my gratitude to the British nation. Live long, the Lord be with you, my helpers. Although you don't know me, all this is true.'

Letter from a soldier's wife :—'I have received your presents and I thank you from the bottom of my soul. You are our giver of gifts, our benefactress; how are we to thank you? We will for ever with our children pray for you. I suppose the good God put it into your heart to remember us poor people, and we think of you and thank you every day. My dear one, allow me to ask you what your Christian name is, for when I pray I want to name you before the Lord. When we wear your clothes we first say, "Oh, Lord, bless those who clothed us." Forgive me that I write thus, but I am crying from joy, and forgive me that I have opened my heart to you. We pray the Lord to keep you safe for the benefit of your own country and for our Russia.'

And meanwhile all too swiftly the short summer drew to an end and another winter campaign faced the Russian nation and the tired, discouraged soldiers.

And still, in all the churches, in way-side chapels, in dim old cathedrals, hundreds of candles burnt daily before the golden ikons, and the air seemed heavy with the wings of prayers that hovered over the kneeling crowds. And perhaps in a distant field, or in a low, outlying trench, a soldier lay dumb and mute beneath the gray, cold sky, while back in the church of some country village a little wax candle burnt every day before his patron saint and a woman prayed with patient lips for his return.

X

THE COURT

And meanwhile the evil tongues continued their gossip, catching here and there a shadow of truth, embroidering on it, exaggerating it, and insinuating even more terrible things that were left unsaid.

In great shadowed drawing-rooms, in the more intellectual circles, where men with long hair and scrubby beards gathered round tables to discuss profound philosophy over innumerable cups of tea, and in smoke-filled cabarets in the lower quarters of the town—everywhere the slander spread and ripened.

There was nothing bad or vile enough that was not insinuated. The Dark Powers behind the Throne! German influence at Court! The suspicion of a separate, treacherous peace! The power of Rasputin! Infamous stories about the Empress! Scandalous rumours about the young Grand Duchesses!

Evil influences there were no doubt at work, and yet they were perhaps not quite what the world

imagines. The tragedy is real enough, but for its cause one would have to look deeper than the melodramatic scandal that has been spread broadcast through the world. One must look further back, one must take into consideration a thousand causes, a thousand, thousand reasons. And above all one must account for the Russian character, with its child-like simplicity and utterly bewildering complexities. It is impossible for us to try and judge them after our own standards, just as it is impossible for us to really understand them.

Yet I have heard people with temerity doing both since I got back to England, and doing it too with a great deal of arrogance and self-confidence. But when I asked these same people whether they had ever been to Russia, they answered generally, 'I was there once for a week,' or still more frequently, 'Oh, no, I've never been there.'

'Russia has betrayed us! Russia has let us down! We really don't care what happens to Russia!' How often does one not hear those phrases, but do the people who say them know what Russia has suffered! Do they know all the cause and reasons of that terrible war-weariness? Have they lived in Russia those first years of the war, seen the shortage of every kind of ammunition, the appalling suffering of the troops, the heart-breaking losses during those retreats when the

soldiers, having no guns with which to defend themselves, had to fight with sticks and stones? Have they worked in the hospitals and seen the wounded pouring in, and not even quarter enough bandages to dress those terrible wounds, and no beds for them to lie on, and no sheets to cover them? Do they know the fearful sacrifice of human life with which each victory was bought? Do they know of the breaking hearts that waited, and perhaps still wait, for those thousands of nameless dead, who gave their lives for some general's mistake, and whose sacrifice has never been recorded? Do they know what the gradual break-down of the railways, the lack of transport, the shortage of factories meant? Have they seen those long, long queues of patient women standing from three on some ice-cold winter morning till ten or eleven to obtain even the bare necessaries of life?

I think hardly any other soldiers in the world would have endured what the Russian soldiers endured, or would have fought under the same conditions without questioning the powers that seemed to look on them, not as an army of human men, but just so many cattle whose sufferings were of very little account and whose lives were of no value.

And Germany, with her marvellous organisation

knew how to make Russia's agony serve her own ends, and one can hardly wonder that the Bolshevik's promises of 'Bread—Peace—and Freedom' should have tempted a people uneducated and untaught, and worn out by three years of untold suffering.

But most assuredly the Emperor never for one moment hesitated in his loyalty to the Allies. And his name would never have been signed on a treaty of separate peace. Neither is it true that the Empress was in German pay or worked for German interests. Her one wish was to hand the autocracy down intact to her son, and for this reason she forced the Emperor to carry out a reactionary policy, and chose Ministers who would help her in this form of government. And Germany used her as an unconscious tool, encouraging this government of repression while they preached revolution through all the country. Protopotoff, suspected of German sympathies, was allowed a free hand, and his restrictions of the Press and general policy provoked the most serious dissatisfaction. Stürmer was hated for his German name and pro-German influence. And Rasputin, whose power seemed supreme, was loathed and dreaded throughout all Russia. A palace revolution was openly spoken of, and even in political drawing-rooms the assassination of the Empress—and

perhaps the Emperor—was mentioned as being the only way of saving Russia.

Nevertheless, the sensational novels that are being published in England have little foundation of truth. The Empress looked on Rasputin as a saint, and believed that by his prayers he would save the life of her son. She was encouraged in this belief by her lady-in-waiting, Anna Vyrubova, who had wormed herself into her confidence, and was a devoted follower of Rasputin. The life the Royal Family led at Czarskoe was the very simplest. Ever since the revolution of 1905 the Empress had held to an almost rigid seclusion, and had kept the Emperor apart, not allowing him to come into touch with his subjects. By this and by her stiffness and aloofness she had alienated all circles; and the Court of Russia, that had been the most brilliant in the world, was now only a forgotten splendour, the myth of a fairy tale.

The Emperor's daughters were brought up just like English girls, and the life they led resembled very much the life in some big, secluded country house. They were never seen in Petrograd society, but nevertheless entered whole-heartedly into anything that offered itself in the way of amusement.

I copy here an extract from a diary of 1914, during the visit of the English Fleet to Kronstadt,

a few short weeks before the war. 'At the ball on board the *Lion* and the *New Zealand* I heard a great deal about the Emperor's daughters. They had been having luncheon on the *Lion*, and every officer and middy in the whole squadron seem to have fallen a victim to their charms. After lunch they seem to have explored the other ships, and the amount of photographs they have promised and the amount of hearts they have broken is really enormous. "What a beastly shame that they weren't allowed to stay on for the ball," as one little middy said to me with—very nearly—tears in his blue eyes.'

Through what dark hours of danger and despair they have passed since then, and I wonder do they ever think of that golden summer day, and of those great, gray ships on the blue water—and of the little middy who spoke of them with such devotion, and who went down with his ship in the Battle of Jutland.

So completely had the Empress alienated the country's feelings, that when the Revolution came piteously few remained true to the Royal Family. But the splendid example shown by Count Benckendorff, brother of the late Ambassador in London; Prince Dolgoronkoff, and a few others, show that they never swerved for one moment in their devotion to the Emperor. Both Count and Countess

Benckendorff shared the long, tedious months of imprisonment at Czarskoe, and when the order came for the removal to Siberia Count Benckendorff, though old and feeble, begged to be allowed to follow the Emperor into exile. Nicholas II., however, refused to accept this sacrifice, and Prince Dolgoronkoff and one lady-in-waiting were the only ones to accompany the Royal Family.

What they have suffered—what the end of that dark chapter will be—history will one day tell us, and perhaps then we shall judge less harshly of what was never treason but only a mistaken weakness.

XI

THE MURDER OF RASPUTIN

VERY early that year a gray drizzling autumn set in, a quick falling of yellow leaves, now and then a little flurry of snow, a whistling wind that drove down the Quay and across the wide squares, rain that beat itself against the windows, half-frozen ice drifting down the river in thin, gray flakes. The little steamers fussed and hurried up stream, great stacks of wood were piled along the quays, the waiting crowds before the food shops were larger than ever—no longer patient and silent, but grumbling and complaining in ever growing dissatisfaction. It was said that in each of these queues were women paid by German money to incite the people against the war, whispering insidious words against the Allies, full of plausible arguments the people were only too ready to believe.

And everywhere, high and low, there seemed a rising feeling of restlessness, a disquiet that shadowed even the most ordinary everyday

actions, a discontent that would not be kept hidden.

Stürmer was still in office despite of all the rumours concerning his pro-German policy; the feeling against the Empress had risen to an intense degree; the stories about Rasputin, that were freely repeated, would hardly bear publication. And yet his power seemed ever on the increase. No warning from friends or relatives seemed able to shake the Empress's belief in him. Ministers were made or unmade according to his wish, his advice was listened to in everything, his house was guarded day and night by special detectives.

Late in December at last the spell of that endless gray autumn was broken. Masses of ice drifting down the river from the Ladoga Lake froze to a dazzling surface of white purity, the slush and dirt of the streets was covered by a heavy fall of snow, the heavy weight of clouds was lifted, and the golden spires and snow-covered roofs shone beneath a clear, cold sky.

And yet the curse of some impalpable evil lay over the town; the murder of Rasputin during the night of December 29th, instead of lifting that shadow, seemed only rather to intensify it, to add to the feeling of strained suspense which brooded over everything.

Out of the many stories circulated concerning

that murder it is almost impossible to know which really is the true one. Even the facts, related by an eyewitness, do not account for everything, and there is supposed to be half an hour missing between the actual firing of the last shot and the final removal of the body that has never been accounted for in any of the narratives.

Hardly possible to believe, that murder, with all its details and horror, seems a page out of some old Byzantine history. All around the sleeping houses, the quiet streets, now and then perhaps a motor passing, a little open sledge slipping silently like a shadow across the snow. And, behind the shuttered windows of the great yellow palace on the Moika, a crime that was to save Russia.

For some time past Prince Felix Yusupoff had seen a great deal of Rasputin, wishing personally to discover how far the stories circulated about him were true. The utter baseness and commonness of the man's character, the way in which he boasted about his power at Court and his relations with the Empress, decided him finally, at all costs, to rid the country of the priest's malignant influence.

Up to the evening of December 29th Rasputin had, however, never been inside the palace on the Moika, Prince Yusupoff always making excuses whenever he had asked to come, saying that his mother did not approve of his friendship with

him, and would be very angry if she knew that he had received him at home.

On the evening of the 28th he, however, telephoned, saying that his parents were away, and if Rasputin would come to supper at his house the next night he would fetch him in his motor at eleven o'clock. Rasputin declined at first, saying that he had been warned not to go out, but finally allowed himself to be persuaded, and promised to come.

When, however, Prince Yusupoff arrived at his house the next evening the priest met him saying that he had decided not to go out that night, as he had again been warned that there would be grave danger for him if he did. Prince Yusupoff argued that no possible harm could come of it. His parents were away; no one would know anything about it; his own motor was at the door and would take Rasputin there and bring him home again. Some stories relate that a woman's name was mentioned: that it was the wish to see her that finally induced Rasputin to accept the invitation, and to ignore the warning he had been given and the promise he had made to the detectives who guarded him not to go out that evening.

Be that as it may, he accompanied Prince Yusupoff to the big yellow palace on the Moika, and was led by him to the dim, underground room,

decorated in the old Russian style, with a small winding staircase that led into another room on the floor above, where the Grand Duke Demitri Pavlovitch, Purishkevich, a doctor, and one or two other young men were sitting. On a table was spread out a little repast: some tea, a bottle of port, two plates of chocolate, and pink cream cakes. A harmless looking meal, and yet both the port and the pink cakes had been carefully prepared beforehand and filled with a deadly poison.

Sitting down near the table, Prince Yusupoff asked Rasputin to have some tea, but the priest at first refused, and sat for a long time talking about his future plans, his power over the Empress, his intention of stopping the war and making peace. Finally he poured himself out a cup of tea and took a pink cake, and, remarking how good it was, another and another, ending up by drinking glass after glass of the port.

There was no sound to break the silence of the winter night: the palace seemed a house of the dead. Sitting opposite that huge peasant priest, watching his face, listening to his overbearing talk, Prince Yusupoff began to wonder whether the man was really mortal, whether the tales of his bearing a charmed life were not true. How was it possible that where another would have died after eating one of those deadly poisoned

cakes, this man could finish a whole plate, and drink nearly a bottle of poisoned wine and yet be sitting there unmoved, apparently completely unharmed.

At last in despair Prince Yusupoff got up and went up the little winding stair to the room above where the others were waiting impatiently. 'What am I to do?' he asked almost wildly. 'He has eaten all the cakes. He has drunk nearly the whole bottle of wine and nothing has happened.'

After a few moments hurried consultation the Grand Duke Demitri pulled out his revolver and said he would go downstairs and shoot him. But Prince Yusupoff refused to allow him to do this, and finally taking the revolver from him, and, holding it in his left hand behind his back, he went downstairs again.

Rasputin sat at the table just in the same place, and sitting down opposite him Prince Yusupoff took up the conversation once more, watching the monk all the time, wondering at what part of that huge body he was to aim, and how he was ever going to accomplish it.

At last, feeling that the strain was becoming impossible, he asked Rasputin to look at a wonderful old crystal crucifix which hung on the wall. Getting up slowly the priest went across the room to examine it, and, following him, Prince Yusupoff

slipped his right hand behind his back, and taking his revolver shot straight at his heart.

With a scream Rasputin fell forward on the floor, and going over to the staircase Prince Yusupoff shouted to the others to come down.

Hastily making an examination, the doctor declared that the death agony had begun and all would be over in a few seconds, and, going upstairs again, they began to make arrangements for getting the motor round and taking away the body.

And yet all the time Prince Yusupoff felt that something was not right, that something kept drawing him downstairs, and presently, the feeling getting too strong for him, he left the others and returned alone to the underground room.

The huge form of the priest lay exactly as they had left it, half lying on a beautiful white bearskin rug that was stretched on the floor. For a few minutes Prince Yusupoff stood motionless, looking down at it, then with a sudden sense of horror he saw how first one eye slowly opened and then the other. And as he still stood, too paralysed to move, Rasputin raised himself and with a sudden inhuman strength threw himself upon him, screaming out the most awful curses.

So furious was the priest's mad assault that Prince Yusupoff was nearly borne to the ground, and before he could recover himself, or the others,

attracted by the sudden noise, could get downstairs, Rasputin had made for a small door leading into an outer court, and tearing it open staggered out into the darkness.

Pursuing him, they found him at last climbing the railings of the garden, and pulling out his revolver Purishkevitch fired at him and hit him mortally.

The police attracted by the sound of the shots appeared at the gates and demanded an explanation, and hastily covering the body of the priest with some snow Prince Yusupoff opened to them, and, telling them that one of the guests at a supper party he was giving had shot a mad dog, gave them a hundred roubles to go away, which they accordingly did.

A little later a closed motor drew up at a side door, something wrapped in a dark cloth was placed inside, and before the police, their suspicions again aroused, could arrive on the scene the motor swung away into the darkness.

XII

THE GATHERING OF THE STORM

THE morning of December 30th a soldier passing across the Petrowsky bridge leading out to the Islands saw tracks of blood on the snow, and after a prolonged search a body was found underneath the ice and transported to the mortuary, where it was discovered to be the body of Rasputin.

The excitement caused was intense; the murder was the one topic of conversation, and the wildest, most contradictory, rumours were circulated. One story had it that the Empress herself, dressed as a sister of charity, went to the mortuary to see the body; another story, on the contrary, declared that on hearing the news she had fallen into a dead faint, and remained unconscious for twenty-two hours, but neither of these stories can be vouched for as being the least authentic.

Reports as to how the murder was actually committed differed also in the wildest degree, and those who had been present refused steadfastly to throw any light on the situation.

Prince Yusupoff, telephoning to the Grand Duke Nicholas Michaelevitch at the Yacht Club, said only: 'I have been accused of murdering Rasputin because last night at a supper party at my house a black dog went mad and had to be shot,' and preserved a stubborn silence when questioned further as to the doings of the night. The Grand Duke Demitri swore on his oath that he had not committed the murder, but was nevertheless by order of the Empress placed under arrest in his palace on the Nevsky Prospect.

Returning from the Staff, the Grand Duke Paul begged the Emperor to give his son back his freedom, but the only reply he got was: 'The Empress cannot allow him to be released.' And when he asked that at least his son might be allowed to come down to his palace at Czarskoe, this request was also categorically refused, and on the night of January 2nd the young Grand Duke, without being allowed to make any preparations, was sent off to a small village on the Persian frontier. So hurried was his departure that he did not have time to take any provisions with him, and the special train had been given orders not to stop anywhere, so that he was forced to travel for two days without any food or drink.

Meanwhile the body of Rasputin was buried in the park of Czarskoe, and it was affirmed that the

Emperor and Protopotoff carried the coffin, while the Empress followed behind with the Czarevitch.

Protopotoff was now Minister of the Interior, a small, gray-haired man, with restless, nervous movements and bright, wild eyes that shifted all the time. A follower of Rasputin, and certainly not quite sane, he played on the Empress's feelings, affirming constantly that the priest had appeared to him in person warning him that great trouble was coming to Russia, and that the people would be punished for his murder.

The treatment of the Grand Duke Demitri had aroused a storm of indignation; the feeling against the Court was rising every day. The Grand Duke Alexandre Michaelevitch went to the Emperor warning him of the consequence if something was not done to arrest the course of events and a new Government formed with a few good men having the confidence of the people. But the Emperor remained obdurate, and replied only that he could do nothing without consulting the Empress.

On January 11th the Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses held a meeting, and sent a signed petition to the Emperor begging him to release the Grand Duke Demitri. The letter was returned with a few curt words, saying that no one had the right to take away life, written across the corner; and

the Grand Duke Nicholas Michaelevitch, at whose palace the meeting had been held, was exiled to one of his estates in the south of Russia.

On the 12th of January my father had an audience with the Emperor, and implored him to consider what he was doing, telling him that he had come to the parting of the ways, and that it rested with him either to lead Russia to victory and a permanent peace or to revolution and disaster. The Emperor replied that my father very much exaggerated the seriousness of the situation, and that he could count on the army to support him in any crisis. At the end of the audience he, however, shook my father's hand and thanked him for all he had said; but apparently again falling under the Empress's influence, he continued to allow her full power, and the situation grew daily more acute.

In the Duma, which had reassembled on November 14th, Monsieur Miliukoff had made a scathing attack on Stürmer, and the latter, finding his position undermined, shortly afterwards tendered his resignation. He was succeeded as Prime Minister by Trepoff, who, though a reactionary, was honestly determined to see the war through, and as Minister of Foreign Affairs by Pokroffsky, who had up to then held the important post of Comptroller of the Empire. Though Stürmer had gone, Protopopoff, whose head had been turned

by his sudden rise to power, still remained; and Trepoff, who found himself hampered at every turn by the baneful influence of the all-powerful Minister of the Interior, endeavoured to induce the Emperor to a reconstruction of the Cabinet. In the end, however, it was Trepoff and not Protopopoff who had to go, and after holding office for six weeks he was replaced by Prince Golitzin, a member of the Extreme Right.

After the murder of Rasputin the Empress's heart was hardened, and she held firmly to her determination to give no concessions to the people, a course of action in which she was supported by Protopopoff, who was becoming daily more insane, and assured her that she alone could save Russia, declaring even at one of his audiences with her that he saw the figure of the Saviour behind her chair.

The arrival of the Allied Missions in the early part of February placed the internal political questions for a moment in the background, and in between the conferences and sittings a rush of sudden gaiety swept over the town. Court carriages with beautifully groomed horses and the crimson and gold of the Imperial liveries passed up and down the streets. An endless stream of motors stood at all hours of the day before the Hotel d'Europe, where the Missions had been lodged.

Dinners and dances took place every night; the big royal box at the ballet was filled with French, English, and Italian uniforms. For a brief moment it seemed to the unheeding world as if the shadow that lay so darkly on the horizon had been lifted, or, if it was still there, people shut their eyes to it with a careless shrug of the shoulders and an all too ready easiness of putting away unpleasant thoughts.

But after the departure of the Allied Missions the cloud gathered again more darkly than ever. The Duma was to be reassembled the end of February, and some anxiety was felt as to whether there would not be serious riots on the date of its opening. Protopotoff, however, assured the Emperor that all measures had been taken to quell any rising of the people. Machine-guns had been secretly placed on the roofs of all the big buildings, and the police had instructions to fire on the people and clear the streets of any crowds that assembled.

The bread shortage was reaching a critical point, and the complaints of the people increased, yet the Duma was assembled in perfect quiet and not a shot was fired. My father, who had waited for its opening, went to Finland the next day for a week's leave, and I had already gone to stay with a friend in the Baltic Provinces. It was just a square-built red house in a clearing among miles

of forest, all round the untrodden purity of the snow, the voiceless quiet of pine woods, the frozen sleep of dozens of little lakes. The war, and all the many anxieties and troubles, the treachery and intrigue, seemed to belong to another world —this world was all white and blue and gold, and there seemed no shadow to dim the radiance of the sunshine. Long mornings spent trying to ski, long afternoons driving through those unending woods, all sunk in the breathless stillness of winter; now and then the sledge upset into a ditch, a laughing extrication of legs and arms and cushions, a return through the blue twilight to the house, with the golden glow of lighted windows beckoning a welcome across the snow.

And already in Petrograd the storm was gathering, and on Thursday evening, March 8th, a bread shop in a poorer quarter of the town was looted, and the first little band of Cossacks patrolled the Nevsky.

XIII

MONDAY, MARCH 12

On the Sunday, March 11th, the Revolution had begun in earnest. By order of the Government posters were stuck up at all the street corners forbidding any more demonstrations. Nearly a hundred unarmed people were shot down on the Nevsky. Rodzianko, telegraphing to the Emperor, begged him to invest some one who enjoyed the confidence of the people with power to form a new Government, adding that no time must be lost, as any delay might be fatal. It has since been ascertained that this telegram never reached the Emperor, but was stopped by General Voyeikov, Commandant of the Palace; and that evening the Government, hopelessly undecided how to deal with the situation, finally settled to prorogue the Duma, whereupon some of the members, shutting themselves up in a separate room, refused to be prorogued and elected a Provisional Committee of their own.

In the country we knew nothing of the events

of the past few days, no news having reached us from the outside world, and the papers only saying that a few shops had been looted, and that some of the workmen in the factories were striking. But we had settled to return to Petrograd on Sunday night, and, swallowing down our dinner hurriedly, we left the warmth of the lighted hall, with its comfortable chairs and blazing fire, and packed ourselves into the waiting sledge. The servants, standing shivering in the lighted door, bowed their farewells, the huge fur rug was fastened firmly round us, the coachman, muffled in his shapeless coat, shook the reins, and, with a sudden silver tingle of bells, we started off.

There was no moon, but the deep darkness of the sky was sown with stars, and the pure white stretches of snow gleamed like sheets of silver on either side. On and on we drove through the breathless silence, down the winding road, past the frozen lakes, through the blue darkness of the woods. Here and there the little wooden houses standing back from the road seemed, with their windows gleaming orange in the darkness, like the huts of some witch or magician, weaving spells for good or evil over the leaping fire.

Then at last the lights of the little station, the waiting-room full of soldiers and peasants in evil-smelling sheepskins, the hoot and whistle of the

engine. The train, coming from Reval, was full to overflowing, even the corridors packed with people sleeping on stools or on the floor; but the head of the district police had reserved us a compartment, and, little knowing that it was the last time we should be allowed such privileges, we locked our door and settled down for the night.

We arrived at Petrograd the next morning at a quarter to eight, the train being for a wonder only ten minutes late. The big, dark station wore somehow a disturbed and somewhat perturbed air, and the sight of one of the English officers in full uniform caused us a little alarm. 'I have come to meet you,' he told us, 'because there have been riots here the last two days, and the police won't let motors go about without a pass.'

With all our luggage dumped on the platform, we stood shivering in the cold of that bitter winter morning. 'The maid had better bring on the things in a cab,' I said, 'and we can all go together in the motor.'

'There are no cabs,' I was told gently. 'They have all gone out on strike.'

'Can't the two maids go in a tram?' my friend suggested, 'and then we can take the luggage with us.'

'There are no trams,' came the same answer

decisively. 'We shall have to get everything into the motor somehow or other.'

The other passengers were now all crowded on the station steps, some of them sitting disconsolately on their boxes, others talking in excited voices, arguing with the porters, who only shrugged their shoulders and repeated stolidly that there were no cabs. One man, more energetic than the others, had managed to get hold of a little hand-sledge, and having piled his luggage on it was pulling it along, his wife, a pretty, fair-haired woman wrapped in furs, walking by his side.

At last the three of us, with our various bags and wraps, the English officer, the two maids, and the rest of the luggage, managed to crowd into the motor, leaving the other passengers gazing after us enviously.

Hardly four yards away we passed a tram with all its windows broken, standing desolate on the lines. A few minutes farther on a soldier with a rifle and bayonet stopped us, and then after a prolonged conversation allowed us to continue on our way.

In the bleak, gray light of that early morning the town looked inexpressibly desolate and deserted, the bare, ugly street leading up from the station, with the dirty stucco houses on either side, seemed, after the snow-white peace of the country, somehow

the very acme of dreariness. The few soldiers we passed eyed us suspiciously, here and there a woman with a shawl over her head hurried along, looking furtively round as if she feared at every corner some hidden danger. But beyond that the streets seemed completely empty, nearly all the shops were boarded up, not a face showed at the windows of any of the houses.

Avoiding the big thoroughfares of the Nevsky and the Moskaia, we made a detour by St Isaacs and drove back along the Quay. One solitary policeman with a white, set face watched us pass but made no movement to stop us. A strange spell of silence and dread lay over the frozen river, the palaces all along the Quay seemed to be holding their breath in a terrible suspense, on the opposite shore the Fortress, with the Imperial flag fluttering against the iron gray sky, looked grim and desolate, the huge bridge spanning the river was absolutely empty.

My father and mother had returned from Finland the day before, and met me at the Embassy with obvious relief, and a very little later the breathless silence, that had been so intense and almost uncanny when we drove through the town, was broken, and the first real fighting began.

Not very far away from us the soldiers of the Preobrajinsky regiment turned out and shot their

officers ; while on the other side the Military Arsenal was stormed, and the rifles, guns, and ammunition fell into the hands of the people.

Shut up now in the house and forbidden to go out, I think I spent most of my time that morning sitting on the big staircase of the Embassy gleaning what information I could from the various people who came and went. Up till now nobody had quite believed in the seriousness of the situation, but by eleven that morning people began to realise that what was happening was more than a rising for food and bread, more than the going out on strike of the workmen of a few factories, more than the desultory shooting of a few policemen.

The regiments sent out against the people joined them one by one. At eleven the Law Courts situated on the Liteinia Prospect were set on fire, a barricade of machine-guns was placed in front of them, and the whole street became a kind of battle-field. We could hear the firing in the distance, but round near us it was still fairly quiet, though it was a quiet that held a sense of unrest and dread.

In the afternoon a few English ladies, braving the very real dangers of the streets, came to the weekly sewing party, and sat talking in hushed voices of what might be the result of all this. The news that the Duma had been prorogued the evening before, and that some of the members

had elected a committee of their own had filtered through, though nobody yet knew for certain the names on that committee.

A little later in the afternoon the first motor-lorries, with which we were afterwards to become so very familiar, passed across the bridge in front of us, filled with soldiers, and here and there a woman with a handkerchief tied round her head, or a sister of charity, her white veil fluttering in the wind.

Occasionally one could hear bursts of firing in the distance, and news was brought us that the Fortress, after very little resistance, had surrendered to the people, and that all the police stations in the town were being raided and burnt. More and more motor-lorries began to pass, and the sound of firing seeming to become more persistent, mother sent the English ladies home early while it was still quite light.

It is curious how sometimes quite little things stand out in one's mind, and of all that day of tremendous happenings there is just one particular incident I can see most clearly. The gray daylight was giving place to a grayer, bleaker dusk, but as yet no street lamps had been lit, and three or four huge motor-lorries, drawn up at the corner in front of our house, looked like huge shadowy monsters, the rifles of the soldiers that filled them pointing darkly against the sky. Quite what it was they

were expecting I don't know, but after they had stood there for some time the solitary figure of a Cossack rode up the Quay towards them, and, braving all the rifles immediately pointed at him, stood still to argue out some point we were too far off to hear. Whatever it was it ended abruptly in a sudden outburst of angry voices, and the sharp crack of a shot as a soldier in one of the motors let off his gun. Near as the range was, he evidently missed his aim, for the Cossack wheeled his horse round, and, bending low in the saddle, made off down the Quay, the snow rising in a silver cloud beneath his horse's flying feet. An angry outburst of firing followed him, then the soldiers in the lorries shrugged their shoulders, and, after a few moments indecision, drove off in the opposite direction, to find something perhaps more worthy of their attention.

Darkness settled on the town, but all during the night the fighting continued. From a house almost opposite us came the sharp bark of a machine-gun, a sound that came to an end with a startling suddenness as the police-officer hidden up on the roof was found and killed by the soldiers. Once or twice armoured cars swinging across the bridge engaged in a mimic battle, which generally ended in either one or the other scuttling away into the darkness, leaving the victory undecided.

Rodzianko meanwhile had sent another telegram to the Emperor, in which he begged him to take immediate steps, adding: 'The last hour has come in which to decide the fate of the country and the dynasty.'

But again no answer came from Nicholas II., who, kept in ignorance by those around him of the true state of affairs, and believing the whole thing to be a riot it needed only a strong hand to repress, commanded General Ivanoff to procced with an army to Petrograd and put down the disorders.

XIV

THE EMPEROR'S ABDICATION

ONE woke on the Tuesday morning with a feeling that all that had happened on the previous day must be a dream, and it was not till the sharp crack of a rifle just outside made me go to the window that I was really sure that I wasn't still asleep. The great square in front had an indescribable desolate air, the tram lines were blocked up with snow, not a cart or a cab of any kind was to be seen, to the right across the frozen river the Fortress stood bleak and gray with no flag fluttering against the sky to give a sign of life. Bands of workmen and soldiers were coming across the bridge in small companies of three or four, and it seemed to me as I watched them that already something had changed about those splendid, well-drilled soldiers, that there was a looseness and a slackness even about the way they walked that had not been there before. They carried, both workmen and soldiers, a motley collection of every kind of weapon. One or two had officers'

swords buckled on, some carried two rifles tied on with a bit of string, others had huge pistols stuck into their belt. A boy of not more than sixteen was carrying one rifle slung across his shoulder, and brandishing another as he walked along, and occasionally, just apparently for joy of the thing, firing into the air in an aimless, light-hearted way. Now and then motor-lorries, bristling with soldiers and rifles, like enormous hedgehogs, decked with huge red flags, lumbered past; and, as the day wore on, one began to see private cars that had evidently been commandeered, filled with a motley crowd of soldiers, sailors, and workmen, two men perhaps lying on the mudguards with their fingers on the triggers of their rifles, and very often the back window broken, with the wicked-looking nose of a machine-gun sticking through the opening.

That same morning the Astoria, the military hotel of the town, was stormed and taken by the Revolutionary troops. During the night the place had been searched, and the General at the head had given his word that there were no arms hidden in the hotel. But at nine the next morning when a regiment marched past with a band playing, a sudden volley of shots was fired at them from the roof of the hotel, and, maddened, the soldiers stormed the building, breaking the big plate-glass

windows with the butt-end of their rifles to force an entrance. All the Russian officers residing in the hotel were arrested, and an old General who tried to fire on the soldiers was killed in the hall. For a few moments it seemed as if the whole place would be ruined, and it was owing to the calmness and presence of mind of the officers of the English and French Missions that the women and children were got safely away, and that the building was not completely demolished.

At midday the Admiralty, which had held out against a determined siege all during the night and morning, was forced at last to surrender, a message being sent from the Fortress that if they did not give in within twenty minutes the big guns would be used and the whole building razed to the ground. Knowing what incalculable damage such an event would mean to the Fleet, Admiral Grigorovitch finally decided to give himself up into the hands of the Revolutionary troops, who, though they divested him of his office, treated him with every consideration. He had been Minister of Marine all the time of our stay in Russia, and many times had shown us great kindness. A tall, dignified, gray-haired man, with a grave face and deep-set mournful dark eyes, his whole heart was bound up in the Navy ; and an English officer who saw him four months after the

Revolution told me that he was hardly to be recognised, so aged and worn had he become, so utterly heart-broken at the ruin of the Fleet.

All during that Tuesday the fighting in the town continued. The State prisons were sacked and burnt and all the prisoners set free. Several of the regiments had arrived from Czarskoe and had immediately gone over to the people, as had the troops of General Ivanoff; but some of the police still held the roofs with their machine-guns, and it was against them that the chief animosity of the crowd was directed. Cruel and tyrannical as they had been, one can't help feeling a stirring of pity and admiration for these men who, sticking to the posts they had been given by a Minister who having voluntarily submitted himself prisoner to the Duma was already addressing the young advocate Kerensky as 'Excellency,' were the only ones to hold out against irresistible odds. Nearly a week after the Revolution, in the attic above Fabergé's shop on the Moskaia, the body of a policeman was found, who evidently died by his gun of cold and starvation. Many others were caught by the crowd and tortured and murdered, many died fighting at their posts, just a few escaped; and I remember, almost the last week I was in Petrograd, recognising an old police-sergeant who, covered with orders, had always held guard on the

Quay before the Palace, sweeping the steps of a shop on the Nevsky.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, March 13th, the house of Count Fredericks, who had been the Emperor's right-hand man, was looted and burnt to the ground. Here the cruelty of the crowd showed itself to its full degree, and when the frightened servants tried to lead the horses from the burning stables they were ordered to take them back, and the doors were locked on the wretched animals. An English girl who was living in the same street told me also how she had seen a soldier stick his bayonet into a dog that ran out of the burning house; and the old Countess Fredericks, who was dangerously ill at the time, only escaped by the promptitude of her servants, who carried her out on a stretcher by a back entrance while the angry mob stormed the front of the house.

The Emperor meanwhile had at last decided to come to Petrograd, and, all unknowing of the situation there, had started on his way only to find the line stopped by a workman's committee, and he himself virtually a prisoner. Realising then how he had been deceived, he turned to those around: 'Why was I not told of all this earlier?' he asked, and who knows what bitterness of spirit was in the simple words.

On March 14th, M. Gutchkoff, who had been

elected member of the new Provisional Government, and M. Shulgin, a delegate of the Executive Committee of the Duma, went to meet the Emperor with the proposal that he should abdicate in favour of the little Tsarewitch, with the Grand Duke Michael as Regent. But, to the surprise of those present, when M. Gutchkoff laid this suggestion before the Emperor, he answered very quietly : 'I have decided to abdicate, and I had meant to do so in favour of my son, but I find now that I cannot be parted from him.'

Gutchkoff, feeling that he could not go against the Emperor on such a subject, gave in to his wish, and it was settled that the Grand Duke Michael should be elected Czar, the Emperor signing the abdication in his favour. M. Gutchkoff and M. Shulgin then took leave of him, and on the 16th the Imperial train returned to Mohileff, as Nicholas II. had expressed the wish to take leave of his Staff.

By this time Petrograd had returned to a state of normal quiet. The streets were crowded with people all wearing red favours, red flags fluttered from all the houses. In many places the wires of the electric trams had been cut and broken by shots, and the trams were not yet running, nor were there yet any cabs to be had, and no motors were allowed to circulate without a special pass from the Duma. Low peasant sledges with straw

at the bottom were the only means of locomotion, and one saw them filled with a strange medley of soldiers, well-dressed women, officers, and work-people. The Imperial arms that hung over some of the shops were torn down and burnt. A crowd assembled on the Square before the Winter Palace to watch a red flag hoisted on the staff from which the Emperor's yellow flag with the Imperial eagle had been wont to float. And in all that silent crowd just one man clapped, while the others stood stolidly looking up at that scrap of red that fluttered against the sky, so small a symbol of an overwhelming change.

Meanwhile the Soviet had sprung into power and was steadily gaining ground. The Grand Duke Michael had refused to accept the throne at his brother's hands, declaring that he would wait to succeed until unanimously elected by the wish of the people.

And what was it the people wished? A Republic? The word they were being taught by the Socialist party who day by day were becoming more powerful. But how little the people understood it must be judged by the conversation overheard between two soldiers: 'What we want,' declared one of them, 'is a Republic.' 'Yes,' returned the other, nodding his head, 'A Republic, but we must have a good Czar at the head of it!'

XV

THE FIRST WEEKS OF THE REVOLUTION

And during all this time the Empress, still living in the palace at Czarskoe, refused to believe in the real state of things, exclaiming when she was told of them: 'Those are newspaper lies. I have faith in God and the army.' And only a few days later the Provisional Government ordered the arrest of the Emperor at Mohileff, and, chiefly from a desire to satisfy the people, who were being worked up by the extremists, decided to place the Empress likewise under arrest.

General Korniloff, who had been made Commander of the Forces of the Petrograd District, came to Czarskoe with three assistants, and asked to see the Empress. Dressed in deep mourning she came out to him, and when he told her that he had received orders from the Government to place her under arrest tears started to her eyes. 'All my children are ill,' she told him; 'my son was better yesterday, but to-day he is again in danger.' General Korniloff asked to be left alone

with her for a few moments, and the Empress gave way to a hysterical fit of tears, but, presently mastering her emotion, said to him quietly: 'I am at your disposition. Do with me what you will.'

General Korniloff thereupon gave orders for the arrest of all the people surrounding the Empress, and having put guards at all the telephones returned to Petrograd. A few days later the Emperor's train arrived at Czarskoe from Mohileff, and Nicholas Romanoff was a prisoner in his own palace.

At this time it was still thought possible to send the Emperor and Empress out of the country. In a speech he held at Moscow M. Kerensky told the people: 'The former Czar is now in my hands. Comrades, the Russian Revolution passed bloodlessly, and I do not wish and shall not permit it to be darkened. I shall never be the Marat of the Russian Revolution. But in the very near future Nicholas II. will be taken to a seaport and from there sent to England.' His speech was received with enthusiasm, but there was a strong faction of the people who, worked upon by the extremists, called for the Emperor to be punished, and it is very possible that but for the abolishment of the death penalty by M. Kerensky on March 20th, this party would have succeeded.

As it was, a delegation of about a hundred and fifty of the Extreme Socialist party went down to

Czarskoe and demanded that the Emperor should be handed over to them; and when they were told that the Emperor was a prisoner of the Provisional Government and could not be given over without a permit signed by some member of the Government, threatened to turn machine-guns on the palace. The guards replied that machine-guns would be likewise turned on them, but the leaders of the delegation still insisted that they must see Nicholas II., if only to assure themselves that he was really there, and at last they were taken to a room in the palace and were told that the Emperor would pass through in a few moments. And presently, after they had waited for a short time, the doors were opened and very slowly Nicholas II. walked through the room. Something, perhaps a stirring of old time loyalty or a feeling of awe in front of that perfect dignity and calm, brought the Revolutionaries with one accord to their feet. In silence they saluted the Emperor whose life they had been threatening, and returned to Petrograd without demanding anything further.

One wonders what that life of captivity and idleness must have meant to the man who had been all powerful. There is a story relating how one day a soldier was seen clearing away the snow in a part of the park where the Emperor was allowed to walk. One of the officers on guard called

out to him and demanded to know what he meant by working without orders. Looking up, the man answered quietly, 'I am trying to kill time.' And the officer recognised him to be the Emperor himself.

When he was told that the death penalty had been abolished, the Emperor, seeing with a clear judgment the result of such an act, exclaimed: 'That is a mistake! It will ruin the army. If it is done to save me from danger tell them that I am ready to give my life for the good of my country.'

And meanwhile in Kronstadt, in Reval, in Helsingfors the sailors had mutinied and murdered their officers. Admiral Nipenin, the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet, a man of exceptional talent and strength, was shot as he landed in Helsingfors, having gone there from his flagship at the request of the Soviet of the town. The atrocities committed in Kronstadt were terrible, and the place became an island of terror and a hot-bed of Bolshevism and anarchy. Admiral Viren, the Commander-in-Chief, is supposed to have burnt at a stake. Many officers were thrust alive under the ice, over two hundred were kept in the dungeons of the Kronstadt Fortress, where they had to submit to the most brutal treatment.

In the army also discipline had been abandoned. On the Northern Front many soldiers had deserted

and things were going badly. Following the example of Petrograd, Soviets had been started all through the army; committees of soldiers who elected or dismissed the officers and decided, according to their own lights, all questions regarding the regiment; and, realising that at this moment an attack might only draw the Russian Army together, the Germans had started fraternisation, a system that spread like a deadly disease all down the long line of the frontier.

On April 5th the victims of the Revolution were buried on the Champ de Mars, not far from the Embassy. The funeral had been put off several times, as the Government feared anti-Revolution demonstrations, and when finally it took place most of the red wooden coffins were supposed to be only filled with stones. No religious ceremony was permitted and no priest was allowed to officiate. The procession, passing all through the town, lasted from ten in the morning till nine in the evening, and as each coffin was placed in the huge, trench-like graves dug on the Champ de Mars, the guns from the Fortress fired the salute and the procession passed on across the bridge singing the Russian 'Marseillaise.' No disorders of any kind occurred, and contrary to all expectations the day passed in perfect quiet and peace.

But during all that spring of 1917 streams of

demonstrations, carrying red flags and singing the 'Marseillaise,' paraded the streets of Petrograd on the slightest excuse. I remember particularly one of these demonstrations when the Square in front of the Embassy was a seething mass of women, children, workmen, and soldiers, all carrying crimson banners at different angles, all singing the 'Marseillaise' at a different time and in a different key; and hurried, pushed, jostled by a careless crowd, a pilgrim, who had come from who knows what far-away monastery, and had found himself caught up and carried along in the stream. An old, old man in a dusty brown robe, with a long pilgrim's staff and a flowing white beard. At the corner of the bridge he managed to extricate himself from the crowd, and as he passed by me coming down the Quay I saw his pale, blue eyes full of tears that ran unheeded down his cheeks, while with a trembling hand he crossed himself over and over again, murmuring in a half whisper, 'God have mercy on us—God have mercy on us!'

The spirit of the old Russia and the new—it faced one everywhere! In the dirty red flags that waved above the Fortress and the Winter Palace, in the white and gold Opera House where the Imperial boxes were filled with a motley crowd of soldiers in leather jackets, women in bright-coloured blouses, wild-looking men with spectacles

and straggly beards. The spirit of change—it met one in the fine old palaces turned into offices for committees and meetings, filled with soldiers and workmen who spat on the floor and lay with muddy boots on the brocade sofas. One saw it again at all the Government buildings, where soldiers slept on guard by the doors, their rifles carelessly propped against them.

But the poison had not yet spread completely, the name of Liberty had not yet been dragged through the dust. The Death Battalion was formed of men who were true to their ideals and had sworn to fight in the cause of the Allies till the last drop of their blood. And early in April a deputation from eleven troops of Cossacks rode up to the Embassy, fierce-looking men, sitting their horses like no other men on earth, with fearless, honest eyes and bronzed, bearded faces. Drawing up in a long line that stretched right down the Quay they sat waiting while some of the officers dismounted and coming up into the Embassy presented my father with an address, which ended in simple, straightforward language: 'We bear witness that the Cossacks . . . will fight still more vigorously for their liberty and for that of the peoples allied with them, that they will defend their country against all disturbances liable to weaken our common fighting power, no matter

from what side they arrive. The whole of the Cossacks, a people not skilful at philosophising nor cunning in the use of speech, but mighty in their word of honour and in their deeds on the battle-field, claim the right to greet, in your person, the victorious British Navy, first in the world not only in numbers but also in might, and the growing millions of your noble army. Long live the Mistress of the Seas of all the world, glorious, honourable, proud old England.'

XVI

SPRING, 1917

KERENSKY was at this time at the very height and zenith of his power, enjoying a popularity that was almost unequalled. I remember, during some big charity entertainment, his appearance in one of the boxes causing the whole audience, oblivious of the performance then going on, to rise in a sudden burst of enthusiasm, many people even leaving their seats and flocking to the middle of the theatre the better to be able to see him. In the *entr'acte* some half-dozen soldiers carried him through the theatre on a chair which they finally placed on the stage. Dressed in the little black workman's coat which he always wore—prompted by his love of a somewhat theatrical appearance—his arm, owing to a slight accident, in a sling, his face paler and more cadaverous than ever, his deep, fierce eyes sweeping the crowd that thronged cheering and clapping to the very edge of the stage, he stood there a moment in silence, and then in the midst of a sudden hush

began to speak in that harsh, unmusical voice that was yet so strangely compelling and enthralling. His speech was short and full of fire and enthusiasm, but it was, above all, the man's personality that was so arresting, in spite of the fact of its not being sympathetic. His thin, cruel-looking face stood out from all others as a painted face of extraordinary vividness on a dark canvas, his small, deep-set eyes held one with the quick power of their shifting glance, his voice rapped out his words with a sharp incisiveness that wasted nothing but went straight to the point with a brutal swiftness. A storm of cheering that seemed to rock and shake the theatre greeted his speech, and he was carried back to his box in triumph. The Revolution was still young in those days, the people had not lost their faith, and were ready to fight for the Liberty they had won.

Yet already, on May 3rd, the Government was in danger of falling in consequence of a note presented by M. Miliukoff to the Allies in which he affirmed that Russia would maintain a strict regard for the engagements entered into with her Allies, and would recognise no peace that did not guarantee the impossibility of a recurrence of a sanguinary war in the near future. The words 'decisive victory' which he used roused a storm of indignation in

the Bolshevik party of the Soviet. A huge meeting took place in front of the Marie Palace, and cries of 'Down with Miliukoff' resounded on all sides.

On May 7th an order, supposed to come from the Soviet, but in reality having been sent from some member of the Extremists, commanded all the workmen not to go to the factories, and all during the day the town was in a turmoil. Bands of men carrying rifles met one at every corner, once more motor-lorries filled with workmen and soldiers swung down the streets. Some of them bore huge red flags with the inscription, 'Down with the Government—Peace at once' written on them in white letters. Others, on the other hand, were inscribed, 'War to the end—support the Government.' Meeting each other the two opposing parties hurled insults at each other; in one or two cases even fired at each other, and several unarmed soldiers were killed by the workmen on the Nevsky.

Several times during the evening big demonstrations halted in front of the Embassy, and, declaring themselves loyal to the Government, called for my father to come out and speak to them. One or two patriotic speeches were held, and the crowd cheered my father and one or two of the English officers who had come round to the Embassy. And yet there was a turbulent spirit of unrest in

the midst of all the enthusiasm. Once or twice from different parts of the swaying crowd a voice was raised in angry vehemence, calling on them not to believe in England, that she was fighting the war for her own ends and was using Russia as a tool. Then there would come a clamour of shouts and hisses, a sudden turmoil, a heated argument, perhaps here and there a raised fist. Later during the evening two huge motor-lorries drove up and halted just in front of the Embassy. A crowd of soldiers and sailors filled them to overflowing, big flags swayed above them in the wind, rifles and bayonets gleamed here and there as the lights from the open windows caught them. A little nervously, not knowing to which side they belonged, the crowd made way for them, and then as they declared that they came from the Council with the news that the Government and the Soviet had come to an agreement, broke out into enthusiastic cheers, and amidst acclamation and the waving of handkerchiefs the motors drove off down the Quay. Presently the huge, shadowy mass of people melted away also, and the soft gray darkness of the early spring night wrapped the river in dreaming peace, broken only now and then by the faint echo of distant cheering. A few days later, however, Monsieur Miliukoff was forced to resign, his place being taken by Monsieur

Terestchenko. Monsieur Gutchkoff also had sent in his resignation, Kerensky becoming Minister of War.

Even in the hospital the effects of the Revolution were beginning to make themselves felt. A few of the soldiers still retained the gentleness and courtesy of manners that had been so pronounced a characteristic, a few still lay with patient, smiling eyes, unquestioning and uncomplaining. But one or two evil influences were beginning to spread the seed of discontent and revolt; discipline was a thing forgotten and put aside, the doctors' orders were neglected, the sisters' requests treated with contempt. Hardly any fresh wounded were coming in from the front, only train after train of men with scurvy, generally such light cases that after a week or two in hospital they were able to leave again, that week, however, giving them time to spread their doctrine of freedom of speech and manners. The Russian Red Cross would or could do nothing to help. When we telephoned to them to ask them to remove a man from the hospital who was inciting the others to sedition, they replied that they had not the power and could do nothing by force. Two deputies, however, came from the Soviet and argued with the man in question, persuading him to leave the hospital of his own free will, as he was now almost completely recovered. He gave

his word to do so, and then as soon as the deputies had gone snapped his fingers at their backs and said that he was very comfortable where he was and certainly intended to stay. Oh, yes, he had given his word, but that did not matter, that was only so as not to have to argue. The matron then told the soldiers that unless they gave up following this man's evil influence the hospital would be closed. But they only laughed and continued to allow themselves to be led on like a flock of sheep, and at last, the situation becoming unbearable, the committee of the hospital reluctantly decided to shut it up for six weeks. The dismay of some of the men when they were told of this was almost pitifully comic. 'Oh, but we didn't know you really meant it—we thought it was not serious—if we had known we would have acted differently.' There were tears in their eyes; they wandered about the blue and white wards like lost souls; the man who was the originator of all the trouble was shunned as if he had some disease. But it was too late now to go back on the decision, and after the men had been comfortably settled in various Russian hospitals, the poor little 'British Lazarette for Wounded Russian Soldiers' was closed—only temporarily, so we all told each other as we said good-bye! And yet there was an aching feeling of finality about it all,

a sense of desolation about those empty wards that caught at one's throat, and all the time the monsters of chaos and confusion spread the shadow of their power over the country, and day by day the old landmarks crumbled away and vanished.

On July 2nd, however, a gleam of hope lit up the darkness. The Russian offensive had been gloriously begun, over 10,000 prisoners had been taken and the troops were still advancing. A wave of a new-born enthusiasm swept over the town, once more processions paraded the streets; only there where the Emperor's portrait had been carried in triumph Kerensky's picture now held the place of honour, and instead of the blue, white, and red flags of the great Russian Empire, the scarlet flags of Liberty were carried in procession.

Now that the offensive had begun, the Government, feeling that they had popular feeling on their side, began to take stronger measures against the mass of agitators who were spreading dissension and anarchy all over the country. Cossacks surrounded the villa of General Dournovo, which had been taken possession of by a band of anarchists, and the whole lot of them were taken prisoner. And there were rumours of further arrests of Bolshevik leaders.

The town seethed with processions and demonstrations of all kinds; at every street corner little

knots of people stood listening to some patriotic orator, or perhaps to a follower of Lenin who was declaiming on the folly of continuing a capitalist war. Untaught and unread as they mostly are, the Russian peasants seem to have a special gift of speech. I have seen a whole theatre held spell-bound while a simple soldier standing on the stage in his dusty, war-stained uniform spoke to them for over half an hour with a perfectly easy flow of eloquence. These street orators swayed their audience one way or another by their arguments, and if one stayed to listen one could hear the most diverse doctrines and politics propounded within a short space of time and applauded with equal enthusiasm. There is a story of a soldier who had been listening so to two speeches, the first of which had upheld the Government and the war; the second, on the contrary, having urged the people to demand a separate peace and the resignation of all the Ministers. One of the passers-by asked the soldier which of the two speeches he considered the best. Slowly, and after much deliberation the soldier replied, 'Eh-barin! they were both good speeches, but the second one was the best: it was ten minutes longer than the first.'

XVII

THE WOMEN OF RUSSIA

So the spring of 'Russia's Glorious Revolution' passed, and summer came—summer with the magic of long golden evenings, the enchantment of dreaming nights when the sky behind the Fortress was like a rose-flushed mother-of-pearl, and the broad river gleamed like a pathway of deepest aquamarines; and sunrise followed sunset so swiftly that the marvellous spire of Peter and Paul still glowed with the reflection of the one when the other flashed it again to gold.

Every year the wonder of those summer nights struck one afresh, every year they seemed to bind themselves round one's heart with a deeper, more subtle charm.

But this year we had no excursions into the Gulf or round the Island. The sailors on Admiral Grigorovitche's yacht had politely told their officers that they did not require their services any more; the 'Tavarisches' used the yacht for their own purposes—whatever they might be—and the little

motor-launch that used to come and fetch us had disappeared. Out on the Islands there were fewer carriages and motors, though the water was crowded with a multitude of rowing-boats, which, as the rowing of the Tavarisches was defective and their steering even more so, bumped into each other without ceasing, calling forth squeals, giggles, and curses.

Now that the hospital was shut up I had more free time, and was able to get down to Finland for a week of lovely summer weather, when we were able to bathe every day, and sit out by the sea till past eleven watching the opal-coloured water change to gray beneath the softly-changing sky.

Later in the summer I spent another fortnight in the Baltic Provinces. Unexpected little lakes that had been hidden under the snow smiled here and there in vivid glimpses of blue between the tall, dark trees. The whispering pine woods held a new enchantment now, and it was difficult to say when they were more beautiful—in their golden, shadowed fragrance, or in their silver silence of untrodden snow. Now in those long summer evenings they were full of whispering ghosts and sighing voices that died weirdly in the silence. One night we lit a huge bonfire in their midst and sat watching the sparks that lost themselves in the darkness over our heads, while the

light of the flames danced on the silent, watching trees and made odd shadows waver and retreat all round us. We spent two days at Reval, the little, sleepy, gray town, with its steep, narrow streets and overhanging houses, and the big grim citadel that faced the dreaming sea, with the golden domes of the cathedral gleaming above its walls.

There was fighting again on the Russian front during those summer days—fighting that fluctuated and died away once more into passive inactivity. And the women of Russia joined hands in a supreme act of self-sacrifice, a vain endeavour to save the honour of their country's manhood. Led by a peasant woman, who almost from the beginning of the war had fought as a soldier in the ranks of the army, the Woman's Battalion was enrolled as part of the Battalion of Death.

'When the soldiers see their women fighting, surely they will be struck by shame and follow us.' So the women argued, and girls of all classes cut their hair, and put on soldiers' uniform, and went through all the training of ordinary soldiers. And the men watched them with furtive eyes, half ashamed, half angry, and the German agents sneered and fanned the anger.

I remember going to a solemn service at the Kazan Cathedral when the First Battalion of women

were ready to start for the front. Standing in the dark doorway of the church we looked down at the silent, khaki-clad ranks of these women and girls who were going out to face the horrors of the most awful war in the history of the world. Laden with all a soldier's heavy paraphernalia, they stood there still and motionless in the soft drizzle of rain, and the old priest who had come out to bless them looked at them, the tears running unheeded down his cheeks. And broad-shouldered, square, resolute, the black and orange ribbon of St George on her breast, the peasant woman who was to lead them knelt at his feet, her firm, brave lips quivering in sudden emotion as she kissed the Golden Cross he held out to her.

People have said that the women of Russia stood aside during their country's agony, and certainly there were many who continued their usual round of Bridge and gossip and flirtation. But all the same it is unjust to say they did not work, and the hospitals were full of girls who had probably never known how to make a bed before the war.

Many of them began their training in the same hospital that I did, and I remember the first day I was there meeting a woman who had been one of the spoilt beauties of Petrograd society. She was standing irresolutely before a particularly

unappetising old beggar with sores on his leg. 'What am I to do to him?' she asked, catching hold of me. 'The sister told me I was to wash him —but how?'

I looked at the beggar's leg and I looked at her. She looked just as sick as I felt, and the beggar sat on the bench and watched us with stolid indifference. He had paid his three kopyeks to have his sores washed and that was all that mattered to him.

'What am I to do?' the woman repeated desperately. 'The sister just said, "Wash him," and that's all, and she's so busy that I daren't ask her again.' Somehow between the two of us we managed to do it, the beggar himself giving us most of the instructions, and when at last it was finished the woman said with a little gasp, her face even whiter than it had been before, 'I shall never be able to stick to it—never.' But, all the same, she did, and worked for two years at a field hospital right up at the front.

Some of them, of course, did not stick to it; some of them joined just because the uniform was becoming, some of them never even got as far as passing the exams. But a lot of them continued to work right on, even after the Revolution, when the soldiers themselves settled how many hours the sisters were to be on duty, and in one

hospital I know of decided that it was not necessary for them to have tea in the afternoon.

And that the women of Russia have suffered nobody can gainsay. There is not one of them that has not been called upon for sacrifice, and what the war has not taken the Revolution has—in blood and iron and fire.

When we blame Russia and cry her down let us try and remember what her women are suffering. What we give we give for our country, but they must stand by and see their husbands and sons and brothers murdered cruelly and wantonly by their own people, see their homes burnt and pillaged, their children dying of famine and disease. And all this not for a cause of Right and Freedom, but for the shame and dishonour of Russia in the eyes of the world.

XVIII

BOLSHEVIK RISING OF JULY

Just opposite the Embassy, across the enormous breadth of the river spanned by the Troitzky bridge, stood the big white house of Techechinskaia, the first dancer of the Imperial Ballet. Early in the spring Lenin, travelling through Germany in a sealed carriage, took possession of this palace, filling it with a crowd of his followers. A monster red flag waved from the roof, every night lights blazed from all the windows, every day crowds surged all round the house, while, from a little kiosk at the corner of the garden, Lenin spoke to them, inciting them against the war, against the Government, against the Allies.

For a short time, during the momentary advance of the Russian troops, the flag was taken down from the roof, the windows were darkened, the house seemed to be empty. There were rumours that Lenin had disappeared to Sweden, whispers even that he had been secretly arrested by the Government. But on the evening of the 16th of

July, sitting at my window after dinner, I saw that huge red flag being slowly hoisted once more from the roof, and heard faintly across the distance the sound of cheering.

Already during the earlier part of the day the first signs of a coming trouble had shown themselves, so faint, so small, that at the time one did not notice them or take heed, and it was only afterwards, looking back, that one remembered. The Cadet members of the Government had resigned, and a few people shook their heads and looked grave. In the morning a long, slow procession of the soldiers over forty, who were asking to go back to their villages for the summer, marched through the town—dreary, slouching, hopeless-looking men with sullen faces. During the afternoon I went to see a friend who lived almost opposite the Military Arsenal. Before the doors a big crowd of workmen were collected listening to a man in a dirty yellow shirt who was making a speech. It was such a very common sight that I paid no attention to it at the moment, but when I came out nearly an hour later and found the crowd still there and even grown larger, I wondered vaguely what they were doing. The speaker in the yellow shirt had gone now, and the men just stood about, talking in excited voices, shouting, gesticulating. They looked so angry that I did

not quite like to stay too long to try and listen to what they were saying, and I went on down the cool, shaded street. A woman standing in a dark doorway shook her head as I passed. 'There will be trouble again,' I heard her mutter, half to herself. Again I wondered what they were doing but then forgot all about it, till, as I was dressing for dinner, I saw a motor-lorry with some soldiers waving red flags shoot past the window. 'What is happening?' I asked my maid, but she only shrugged her shoulders. 'God knows,' she answered despondently. 'They are surely all mad Barishnia.'

After dinner again we saw a motor-lorry pass, and then another and another, the people in the streets standing still to watch them with puzzled, disturbed faces. My father, who had not been able to get out all day, was going out for a drive after dinner. The chasseur, coming up to say that the carriage was ready, stood a moment hesitating at the door. 'It would be better for your Excellency not to go out,' he said at last. 'The streets are not quiet.'

'But what is happening?' my father asked. The man shook his head. 'I don't know, Excellency. It would be better not to go.'

My father, however, insisted, saying that he would not go far, and he and my mother started out.

Sitting working at my window I saw how they tried to get across the bridge but were unable to advance owing to a dense block of trams and motors, and had to turn back and drive along the Quay, which was practically deserted. But meanwhile, as I sat there, that flag was hoisted from Techechinskaia's palace, and fluttered a patch of brilliant scarlet against the gray shadow of the mosque behind. The shore opposite seemed black with people, and some of them came hurrying across the bridge, glancing nervously behind them as if they feared pursuit. Meeting the other crowd trying to get to the other side, 'It is no good,' they told them. 'You can't get across.' 'But what has happened?' came the excited question, and always came the same answer, 'God knows—there is trouble coming.' More and more motors began to pass bristling with guns in all directions, filled with soldiers who were shouting out, 'Down with the Government, down with the capitalists!'

My father and mother came back shortly afterwards, saying that farther along the Quay everything was perfectly quiet, but meanwhile the crowd in front of the Embassy grew ever denser, all the trams had stopped, the bridge was a seething mass of people, and several private motors that passed were held up by soldiers who turned out the occupants without any ceremony and took

possession of the cars themselves, swarming into them like a lot of insects, five or six inside, two on either step, two or three on the box, two more lying along the mudguards. And presently two fully-armed regiments came marching across the bridge, carrying banners inscribed in flaring white letters with 'Down with a Capitalist War—Down with the Upper Classes. Long live Anarchy. Bread, Peace, Freedom.'

My father, getting a little anxious, made me telephone to General Knox, the head of the Military Mission, to ask whether he knew what was happening. But the quarter of the town where he lived was perfectly quiet and he had heard nothing, knew nothing of any disturbances. A little later, however, as another regiment came across the bridge, followed by a lot of armed workmen, my father telephoned again, asking General Knox to come round to the Embassy, as something must certainly be happening.

Armed motor-cars were buzzing in all directions now, and as slowly the sunset faded into a soft, gray dusk the crowd grew denser and denser. General Knox arriving with one or two other English officers tried to telephone to the General Staff, but could get no information. Nobody knew what was the matter. Oh, yes, something was evidently wrong, but what it was, or why, nobody could

tell. At last, at about eleven o'clock, General Knox went round to the Staff himself to try and gather a little more definite news. A little later one of the correspondents telephoned to say that they were fighting on the Nevsky, and at about half-past eleven a sudden volley of firing came up from somewhere on the Champ de Mars; and the Square in front of the Embassy, that had been a black mass of people, was cleared as if by magic as the crowd scattered in all directions, some of them taking shelter behind the Marble Palace just opposite, others hiding behind the Embassy itself, others again flying across the bridge. The firing, however, died away as suddenly as it had begun, and General Knox, coming back from the Staff, said that General Polovtzoff was quite calm and did not consider the trouble serious. The Cossacks were ready to come out if there were any very grave riots, but as yet it was thought there was no definite need and the Government had given no orders.

And meanwhile on the Nevsky some fierce fighting took place, the soldiers turning their machine-guns on the crowd without any reason or excuse, driving up and down the street, firing wildly and indiscriminately as they went. And later during the evening a crowd of armed workmen and soldiers surrounded the house of Prince Lvoff, where Monsieur

Tereschenko and some of the other Ministers were having dinner. 'We have come to arrest the members of the Government who are here,' so ran the message the crowd sent in. The Ministers sent back word inviting them to enter and discuss with them, but though the house was unguarded and unprotected the crowd feared that a trap was being laid for them, and melted away, merely requisitioning the Ministers' motors that stood at the door.

During the early hours of the next day the town appeared almost peaceful. There were very few people in the streets, the trams made an attempt to run as usual, a few carts lumbered across the bridge as if nothing had happened. But presently the trams stopped running altogether, armed motors began to tear about again, any private car that dared show itself in the street was immediately stopped and taken possession of, and, in spite of an order from the Government forbidding any kind of demonstration or procession, huge bands of workmen with rifles and fixed bayonets kept on coming across the bridge. And a little after twelve three thousand of the Kronstadt sailors marched past the Embassy, an endless stream of evil-looking men, armed with every kind of weapon, cheered by the soldiers in the Fortress, though the ordinary public in the streets shrank away at sight of them.

Looking at them, one wondered what the fate of Petrograd would be if these ruffians with their unshaven faces, their slouching walk, their utter brutality were to have the town at their mercy.

And the Government seemed to be quiescent; nothing was heard of them, nobody seemed to know anything. Kerensky was at the front, the other Ministers seemed to be in hiding. People said the Cossacks were ready to come out, but so far nothing had been seen of them.

Early in the afternoon there was again some heavy fighting on the Nevsky. Somebody had fired at the sailors from a window, with the result that they traversed the street with their machine-guns, and over a hundred people were killed. A little later, while I was sitting with my mother, bands of armed workmen came down the Quay, and aiming their rifles at all the houses, commanded in a threatening manner that every window be closed. Still a little later a crowd of soldiers surrounded the Embassy, and a Russian friend of mine who came to see me at that moment and had had some difficulty in getting through them told us that they were saying they had come to demand the publication of all the Secret Treaties, and that their intention was to attack the Embassy. However, presently the whole crowd of them melted away, something having evidently changed their

mind, and about half an hour later the first Cossacks rode past: great, bronzed men, riding through the crowd of soldiers and motor-lorries full of armed workmen and sailors as carelessly as if there were not over a hundred rifles ready to fire on them at any moment. Several of the workmen shook their fists at them as they passed, muttering curses under their breath, but nobody stirred and not a shot was fired, and one began to feel that after all there was perhaps still a Government and a power in the country.

XIX

JULY 17 AND 18

THAT evening of July 17 stands out very clearly in my memory, not perhaps so much for the actual events, but for a rather unexplainable atmosphere of dread that seemed to brood over the town. I suppose the weather really had something to do with this feeling, for heavy thunder-clouds lay piled in ominous masses behind the Fortress; the river lay dark and sullen, with an oily reflection on the gray waters, and only now and then little puffs of a hot dry wind blew clouds of yellow dust up from the Champ de Mars across the Square.

One or two people were dining with us that night, and at the beginning of dinner Monsieur Tereschenko rang my father up on the telephone, warning him that some severe fighting might take place in the town during the next two or three days and begging him to go away for a little. When my father came back to the dining-room and announced this little item of news, General Knox looked sternly at me. 'Well, at any rate, the child

must go,' he said. I made a face at him across the table but prudently said nothing. At such moments I always found that a policy of masterly inactivity and apparent submission generally carried the day, helped out by very carefully temporising and promising to go away—the next day.

We continued our dinner peacefully, but we had just reached the pudding when the chasseur—rather white and agitated—appeared in the doorway. 'Excellency, the Cossacks are charging across the Square,' he announced.

Leaving our pudding untasted we made a slightly undignified rush to my father's study, from where a good view of the Square could be obtained, but only arrived at the windows in time to see one or two sailors hastily disappearing round the corner of the Marble Palace, while line upon line of Cossacks swept up from the Champ de Mars, and turning the corner by the Embassy rode on down the Quay towards the Summer Gardens. They had as a matter of fact driven a crowd of Kronstadt sailors full tilt before them up from the Nevsky, forcing some of them to take refuge in the Marble Palace, while others scattered across the bridge. One of our housemaids declared that she had seen a Cossack cut a sailor's head clean off with one sweep of his sword, but I cannot vouch for the truth of

this story, and I saw no signs of a headless body on the Quay.

We stayed for a minute or two to watch the remaining Cossacks ride past, clouds of dust sweeping up under their horses' hoofs, the points of their long lances standing out against the angry sky. Then we returned to the dining-room to finish our pudding, but we had hardly done so when a sharp volley of firing brought us again to our feet, and once more we hurried back to my father's room.

The firing seemed to be coming from the direction of the Summer Gardens, and for a few minutes it continued with unabated violence, but on the Quay itself there was nothing to be seen, only a little group of loitering soldiers by the corner of the bridge, all looking in the direction of that turmoil that we could not see. Then suddenly above the crack of the rifles came the report of a field-gun, and the soldiers scattered in all directions, two of them flinging themselves flat on their faces in the road. And hardly a minute later, with a wild scurry of flying hoofs, two riderless Cossack horses dashed past, knocking down a man who tried to stop them, disappearing down the Quay in a cloud of dust.

The firing had died down to an almost startling silence, broken only by a low rumble of distant

thunder and the patter of one or two heavy drops of rain. Presently one of the English officers, who had gone out to try and gather news of what had happened, came back to say that the Cossacks had fallen into a Bolshevik ambush in the Summer Gardens, and that several of them had been killed. They were supposed to be fighting again in the Litenia, though which side was gaining the upper hand nobody knew.

Unable to tear ourselves from the windows we wandered aimlessly from room to room, while rapidly the thunder-clouds darkened behind the Fortress and the wind-driven dust whirled across the bridge. The crowd of loitering soldiers at the corner had thickened. Arguing angrily together they stood gathered in little groups, and now and then a word or two drifted up to us through the heavy stillness—'the Government—Freedom—the Soviet—the Capitalists—the Germans—the Allies.' Evidently their conversation turned on the same eternal subjects that had been discussed for so long and yet remained always undecided.

Suddenly, however, they stopped arguing, drew back a little, all staring down the Quay, and presently a huge Cossack appeared leading by the arm a ragged, disreputable looking soldier. In a silence that was curiously tense the crowd by the bridge watched them come, and, unarmed,

save for the sword that clattered on the pavement, the Cossack faced them, and dragged the cringing soldier after him. Then—when they had almost passed—the soldier made a frantic effort to free himself from the restraining hand. 'Tavarische (comrades), he cried, his voice rising to a hysterical scream, 'Tavarische!'

The silent little crowd of watching soldiers surged forward, hastily the Cossack tried to draw his sword, but before he could do so one of the surrounding soldiers wrenched it away from him and dealt him a terrific blow on the head. For a second as he fell to the ground we caught our breath thinking we were going to see him cut to pieces, but with a surprising agility he got to his feet again, and charging head-foremost into the surrounding crowd got clear, and made off down the Quay pursued by screams of rage and two or three bullets which apparently, however, none of them hit him.

Providentially, too, at that moment the rain came down in a sudden blinding sheet, and the soldiers, their collars turned up, made off in various directions, and peace and silence fell over the town.

General Knox and Major Thornhill were living in the Embassy, and a guard of thirty soldiers, under the command of a very talkative little

Russian officer, had arrived apparently from nowhere and taken up their quarters.

The night passed perfectly quietly, but early the next morning two or three armoured-cars suddenly appeared and stationed themselves on the Quay, and while we watched them with a certain anxiety motor after motor full of soldiers drove up and halted by the bridge, while the soldiers, getting out, lined up in front of the Embassy. Nobody seemed quite to know to which side they belonged or for what purpose they had come, but presently our little Russian officer bustled in to tell us that they were loyal troops and that the Government had decided to take up all the bridges and try and isolate the rebels and prevent them passing to and fro. At the same time he warned us that the Bolshevik troops quartered in the Fortress might try and prevent this measure being taken, might even use their big guns, in which case he begged us to go at once to the back of the house. All this with a tremendous flow of volubility and eloquence. Of course there was no real danger—none at all—but still it was always best to be prepared; it might be better even to have a bag packed ready in case it were necessary to leave the Embassy altogether, though certainly he hoped that no such need would arise.

Accordingly, feeling rather as if we were taking

part in some half-tragic, half-comic cinema film, we each of us packed a little hand-bag—and I realised then how very difficult it is to know what things are really indispensable when one is only allowed a very limited choice. My chief anxiety at the moment, I think, was my Siamese cat, who was put into her travelling basket, protesting loudly against such, to her understanding, very unnecessary treatment.

However, the Bolsheviks offered no resistance whatever. The big arch of the bridge was slowly swung open, guards were stationed along the Quay, and climbing back into their motors the rest of the soldiers drove off, and a dead calm seemed to settle down on everything.

Occasionally an armoured-car showed itself on the opposite shore, on the walls of the Fortress soldiers could be seen looking across the river, but nothing happened. A cloudless sky shone above the town, the spires and domes flashed with unbearable brilliance in the sunshine, the river lay as smooth and still as a sheet of deepest aquamarine.

Late in the afternoon I went out along the Quay. Soldiers stood on guard at all the street corners, every motor that passed was stopped and questioned, curious crowds were gathered before the closed bridges, looking across to the opposite shore.

And here and there groups of rather angry-looking men stood talking together, watched by the rest of the passers-by with a certain suspicion. 'Bolsheviki,' one heard them whisper, and they edged a little closer, perhaps trying to hear the low-toned discussions, then, being met with a muttered curse, shrank back and looked hastily away

XX

THE TAKING OF THE FORTRESS

SLOWLY the day passed into evening, the sunset tinged the river to the colour of molten flame. Dark and tall and unbelievably slender the spire of Peter and Paul stood out against the burning sky. From gold to rose the changing colours throbbed and glowed. A little tender violet mist shrouded the walls of the Fortress, and behind Lenin's white palace the big shadow of the Tartar Mosque stood up as if cut out of black paper.

The little Russian officer dined with us, and talked a constant stream which quite did away with the chance of anybody else being able to say a word. During dinner my father had a private warning that the Government were preparing an attack against the Bolsheviks that would probably take place during the night. After dinner, in order to try and get away from the little Russian's flow of conversation, I sat on the window-sill and looked out on the wonderful peace of the empty Square that was generally such a pandemonium

of trams and carts and motors. The soldiers on guard at the bridge stood leaning on their rifles, talking in low tones, and now and then some curious passer-by would pause to look across the river. Once two Cossacks with rifles slung across their shoulders rode slowly past, the clatter of their horses' hoofs ringing loudly in the intense silence, and once a little motor-boat sped with incredible swiftness down the river, spurning the dreaming waters to a sudden life and motion.

Slowly the sunset fire and splendour paled to a dusk that seemed to hold the colours of mother-of-pearl, soft-footed shadows stole down the river-side, and a few faint stars shone dimly in the tender sky.

It was an unbearably hot night, and I remember getting up at about three in the morning to open the window a little wider. A pale gold light was stealing along the sky, the crimson flag on the Fortress hung limp in the intense stillness, two soldiers sat fast asleep on the bench by the bridge, while three others walked slowly to and fro, the points of their bayonets catching the faint reflection from the brightening sky. And as I stood there trying in vain to get a little breath of air the whirr of a motor broke the silence and galvanised the sleeping soldiers into sudden alertness. Puffing and snorting the motor drew up, and two officers, followed by a sailor and a Cossack, got out and

walked up to the bridge, standing there in earnest conversation. Presently I saw our own little Russian officer join them, and I was filled with a very violent curiosity to know what it was they were discussing. However, after a minute or two they got back into their motor again and drove off, and since nothing seemed to be going to happen just yet, I got sadly back into bed again and—still wondering—fell asleep.

At six, however, I was woken up again by a violent report just outside, and getting up hastily saw that the whole Square was a mass of soldiers and sailors, who were all drawn up to attention and all seemed in some state of excitement. Quite who it was or what it was who had fired I could not make out, but I saw that the bridge had been swung back into position and one or two officers stood on it, looking anxiously across it. Evidently something was going to happen, and probably whatever it was it had to do with the mysterious action the Government intended taking against the Bolsheviks. Hearing at the same time a certain amount of movement going on in the house, I put on a dressing-gown and opened my door and ran straight into one of the English officers with an overcoat on over his pyjamas.

'Oh!' I was a little taken aback. 'Were you coming to call me? Is anything the matter?'

'Yes,' he answered briefly. 'Will you please go up and call your people and tell them they must go down to the coach-house at once. The Government are attacking the Fortress and the Bolsheviks will probably use their big guns.'

'May I dress first?' I asked meekly, but was told with some severity, 'No, please go and tell your father at once.'

So obediently I went up and called my father and mother, and also woke up my maid, who was fast asleep, and was more than a little startled when I shook her violently and told her she must get up at once.

Coming downstairs again I met General Knox in a beautiful red dressing-gown. He met my cheerful smile with a frown. 'You oughtn't to be here at all,' he told me severely, and then said he was looking for my father, as the officer in command of the Government troops who were attacking the Fortress wished to speak to him.

In the bright morning sunshine we must have looked a somewhat dissipated and motley assembly, arrayed as we were in an odd assortment of dressing-gowns and coats; but the officer in command of the operations behaved as if there was nothing unusual in the circumstances, and as if it was the most natural thing in the world to be received on the Embassy staircase at six o'clock in the morning

by an Ambassador with a greatcoat on over his pyjamas and a pair of bedroom slippers on his bare feet.

He told us that he was confident of being able to take the Fortress, but that the Embassy being in the direct line of fire it would be wiser for us to go to the back of the house and—in the eventuality of very severe fighting—be prepared to leave altogether at a moment's notice.

So accordingly we once more packed our bags, and the Siamese cat was again—protesting even more violently—put into her travelling basket, and we then went up to the drawing-room, from where one had the best view of what was going on.

All down the Quay soldiers were kneeling behind the low stone wall with their rifles resting on the top and their eyes fixed on the opposite shore. A little way farther down several machine-guns were hidden in a big stack of wood, and the whole Square was packed with a dense mass of soldiers and sailors of the Naval Cadet School.

Now and then companies of soldiers preceded by armoured-cars advanced cautiously across the bridge, but the guns of the Fortress remained silent, and the red flag fluttered unconcernedly against the sky.

Once an armoured-car from the opposite shore

began to advance across the bridge to meet the troops from our side, and the soldiers in the Square put their rifles to their shoulders—then after a second's breathless tension the Bolshevik motor turned and scuttled off in the opposite direction, and a little ripple of amusement ran down the lines of troops along the Quay.

Presently, beginning to get rather hungry, we went to have our breakfast, though the fact that there was no milk or butter and hardly any bread did not quite add to one's enjoyment of the meal.

More and more troops were advancing across the bridge, and now and then the crack of rifles or the rattle of machine-guns could be heard from the opposite shore, but still the guns of the Fortress remained silent, and presently we all went to dress.

At about half-past ten M. Tereschenko telephoned to my father begging him to come at once with my mother and myself to the Foreign Office, as he did not consider the Embassy to be safe. My father absolutely refused to leave, and mother would not go without him. They wanted, of course, to turn me out, and General Knox told me that I was more trouble than all the Russian army, but while they were still arguing about my fate a message was brought us that Lenin's palace had been taken by the Government troops and that the Fortress was expected to yield very shortly,

and I hastily seized on this to assure them that now it really was not worth my leaving the Embassy.

Occasional bodies of troops could still be seen advancing across the bridge, and now and then a certain amount of shooting could be heard, and it was not till nearly one that the Fortress actually surrendered, without having used those much-threatened big guns, or put up really any very great resistance.

Almost immediately a dead calm settled over Petrograd. Soldiers still guarded the bridge, but the trams started running again, the usual traffic was resumed, and the town began to wear its ordinary aspect. The Government had won the day and the force of the Bolshevik insurrection was broken, so everybody said; and yet the very next night machine-guns hidden in barges down the river, and under the bridges, suddenly opened fire on the Quay, while many of the streets were likewise swept by a sudden rain of bullets that came nobody quite knew from where or for what reason. Government troops were hastily summoned, and after about an hour or two the shooting died away as suddenly as it had begun.

And now that they had the power in their hands, Kerensky and the Government let the propitious moment pass. The Kronstadt sailors, taken prisoners in the Fortress, were set at liberty instead of being

shot as traitors. Lenin, having been given ample warning that the troops were coming to arrest him, had walked out of his back door and disappeared nobody quite knew where, and several of the other Bolshevik leaders were set free.

'We must shed no blood!' so Kerensky preached, the idealist in him once more overcoming the statesman and ruler, hesitating to strike a crushing blow at the insidious evil of Bolshevism that was spreading like a disease through the ranks of the army. And the Cossacks burying their dead in the wonderful cemetery of the Alexander Nevsky, marched with surly faces in the long procession—these, their comrades who had fallen were given a wonderful burial—with flowers and music and much pomp. But what good was that going to do them now? They had given their lives to save a Government that had been overthrown by a horde of rebels, and the Government accepted the sacrifice and did nothing to punish the rebels. You must not shed the blood of your brothers! But had not their brothers' blood been shed, and was it to go unavenged? It was a question that remained unanswered, but was not forgotten.

On September 3 Riga was given up to the Germans, and so slight was the resistance made by the Russian troops, so swift and unexpected

was their surrender that the people in the town hardly knew that the enemy were near, but were continuing their ordinary life, all the shops and cinemas being open, and the restaurants and hotels crowded.

Scenes of indescribable confusion and horror took place when the fact that the Germans were at the gates burst on the population; there was a wild panic to get away, part of the town was in flames, and as usual there was no organisation or order.

And devastating everything as they went, the Russian army retreated, leaving guns and ammunition behind them, turning their own wounded out of the ambulances to swarm into them themselves in their mad flight. Hospitals and farms and country houses, anything that lay in their path, was burnt and destroyed, while the inhabitants fled before them in terror. Reval was in a state of panic, and the trains coming in from the Baltic Provinces were so packed to overflowing that people were even sitting on the roofs of the carriages with their trunks and furniture.

The Conference in Moscow from which so much had been hoped had brought forth no really definite result or settlement, and the ever-widening breach between left and right seemed to have been made worse instead of better. Patriotic speeches had

been made on both sides, but they seemed only to stir up party feelings to a greater extent.

The rivalry also between Kerensky and Korniloff was growing acute, and it was becoming evident to everybody that it would soon come to a definite split between the two men.

Kerensky's speech at the Conference was not a success; his manner was hysterical and weak, and he repeated himself in a string of patriotic phrases that gave no decisive plan of action. His aping of 'The little Napoleon' also rubbed people up the wrong way, and the fact that two A.D.C.'s stood behind his chair drawn up in a military salute all the time he was speaking gave rise to a burst of contempt, and was looked on as a pose no emperor had ever dared attempt.

General Korniloff's speech demanding the restoration of discipline in the army, and laying down the methods by which he meant to make an attempt to restore order, was also not received with enthusiasm except by Rodzianko and the party of the right, who, by their violent support and acclamation, only added to the impression that he was implicated in a counter-Revolutionary plot.

It was an impression his enemies were only too ready to foster and make the most of, and that he had many enemies in political circles there is no doubt. In the army his name was worshipped,

and he was perhaps the one man who could have held it together and made it again a force on the field. A short, square figure, with small, deep-set, brilliant eyes, he had an extraordinarily vivid personality and a charm of manner that was absolutely simple and direct. He had been told by an old gipsy that he would not die till he was a certain age, and, believing her implicitly, he knew absolutely no fear, and if remonstrated with for taking unnecessary risks he answered only, 'It isn't my time to die yet.'

Taken prisoner by the Austrians in the big retreat in the Carpathians, he made up his mind to escape and get back to Russia. Feigning illness and a sullen, taciturn character he shut himself early in his room every evening, and refused to come out till quite late in the morning, and would not allow any other doctor but a Russian Pole to come near him. Finally, having made all his preparations, he disguised himself as a workman and managed to get out unobserved, and when the doctor went to his room the next morning he found there another Russian officer who handed him a letter which commanded him as a Russian subject to keep silence for twenty-four hours, and told him that a duplicate of this letter had already been sent to Russia, so that if he disobeyed, this disobedience of his would be known.

Meanwhile Korniloff, having changed his disguise to that of an Austrian soldier, managed to get as far as Buda-Pesth. A little beyond this the news got about that he had escaped, and he and the two Russian soldiers who accompanied him had to leave the trains and high roads and keep only to the woods, living on nuts or fruit or anything they could find to eat. One of the soldiers giving way to his hunger strayed into a village and evidently got killed, but Korniloff and the other one, marching for over two weeks avoided pursuit and managed to reach the frontier. They were nearly stopped there by the soldiers on guard, who said that a Russian General had escaped and there was a big price offered for his capture. 'A Russian General!' Korniloff answered. 'They are all of them old and decrepit and half blind. You'll soon recognise him if he passes this way.'

The careless, laughing reply averted suspicion for the moment, and, having waited for the dark, Korniloff and his companion at last managed to get across the frontier into Russia.

XXI

THE FAILURE OF THE RUSSIAN ARMY

THE lovely summer weather held for some time, day after day passed in cloudless splendour, evening after evening the sun sank in a golden sea of fire. But the shadow which hung over Russia grew in darkness, and the phrase one had heard over and over again at political meetings, 'Our country is on the brink of ruin,' recurred to one's mind in ever-increasing vividness.

Bolshevik propaganda was gaining ground daily at the front, all down the line the troops were leaving their trenches, daily more and more soldiers filled Petrograd, slouching up and down the Quay, leaning up against the parapets, lying along the pavements, eating sunflower seeds and smoking cigarettes. They filled the trams to overflowing, taking joy rides round and round the town and thereby preventing business people from getting to their work. Travelling became a thing fraught with discomfort and even danger, the soldiers swarming into the carriages, turning out the ordinary

passengers, breaking the windows and climbing through that way if the corridors and doorways were blocked, and swarms of them again infested the country, terrorising the peasantry, plundering and murdering as they went.

Kalish and Tarnapol were lost, over 600 heavy guns and all their ammunition fell into the hands of the enemy. In one place seven regiments were in full retreat. The first detachment of the women's brigade at the front suffered heavy casualties, though they took 200 prisoners, in spite of the fact that the regiments on either side of them deserted, leaving the women to bear the full attack of the enemy alone.

General Korniloff published a telegram in which he called the soldiers madmen and demanded the re-establishment of capital punishment. Kerensky, who was now Prime Minister as well as Minister of War and Marine, had established himself in the Winter Palace and was living in the Emperor's rooms, tendered his resignation, but was persuaded to withdraw it, and managed to form a new Cabinet.

And very early one morning towards the end of August the Emperor and his family were brought to the Czarskoe Station to embark in the train that was to carry them to the little town of Tobolsk, just across the Siberian frontier. Kerensky himself met them at the station, and a company of soldiers

were drawn up on the platform. As he came out the Emperor's hand went up involuntarily to his cap, but not a soldier returned the salute, and in silence the little party proceeded down the lines to where the train was drawn up some way out of the station. Ministers and deputies of the Soviet travelled comfortably about Russia in Imperial saloon carriages, but an ordinary, first-class passenger carriage had been thought good enough for that long journey to Siberia, and so little had it been prepared that women with dirty handkerchiefs bound round their heads were still washing down the corridors when the Emperor and his family got in.

Slowly at last the train began to move, and one of the officers attached to Kerensky saw the Emperor standing at one of the carriage windows looking back at the little town of Czarskoe with its white palaces and parks, crossing himself over and over again, the tears running unheeded down his cheeks. Feeling his heart swell out in a sudden burst of loyalty, the young officer stood at the salute, his eyes fixed steadily on the Emperor. Perhaps Nicholas II. saw and understood, perhaps the unspoken devotion in the boy's eyes brought him a ray of comfort, for as the train passed on he looked back and returned the greeting, a flickering smile lighting up his worn, sorrowful face.

Very little was done to make that long journey easier, and when at last the Imperial family arrived at Tobolsk the Governor's Palace had not yet been got in readiness for them, and they had to spend several days on board the little steamer on the swollen river, with the rain coming through everywhere and no comforts of any kind provided.

And yet, that the great heart of Russia had not quite forgotten the Emperor is shown by a story that was at this time told all over the country, and was looked on as a miracle and a presage. A story of how in a tiny village in the government of Moscow an old peasant woman dreamt that the Holy Virgin appeared to her, standing upright with the Infant Christ sitting at her feet, and her arms stretched out, holding in one hand a branch of olives, in another a golden crown. And in her dream the old peasant woman fell down at the feet of the Miraculous Vision and worshipped her. And then, still kneeling, she humbly asked the Holy Mother why she had not the Infant Christ in her arms as in all the other pictures and images of the Virgin. And sorrowfully the Mother of God replied, 'Russia has forgotten her faith, and no longer prays to the Saviour of the World. Nevertheless, Russia shall be saved by the prayers of the martyred Czar.' And then the Vision told the old peasant to go and look in a certain barn

in a certain place, and, strong in her faith, the old woman went the next day and found in that identical place the picture seen in her dream, of the Mother of God with her arms stretched out and the Infant Christ at her feet. And from all parts of Russia people thronged to see the picture, and it was carried in procession through the village, and believed to be a miracle which was going to save Russia.

XXII

THE COUP D'ÉTAT OF KORNILOFF

SUNDAY, September 9, was a day as warm as summer, with a cloudless sky above the golden spires, and the river a thing of dreaming beauty.

My father left early in the morning to play golf at Mourina, a tiny little village about twenty miles away where a rough golf-course had been laid out by members of the English colony. He had just gone when my mother had a telephone message saying that M. Tereschenko, who was on his way to headquarters, had been stopped and called back. There was no absolute proof of the news being true, but, somehow, a vague feeling spread itself round the town that something was happening or was just going to happen. It was so undefined that nobody could explain it or give it a reason; but when, several times during the afternoon, they telephoned from the Foreign Office asking when my father was coming back, and urging that he should come round there at once, we began to

believe that it was not only our imagination but that something serious was really the matter.

My father arrived back at half-past seven and telephoned at once to the Foreign Office, and the message came back asking him to go round there directly after dinner. A little after eight the French Ambassador arrived at the Embassy and went off with my father to the Foreign Office, and presently people began to come in with all sorts of various reports—Korniloff had declared himself Dictator and was on his way to Petrograd, followed by all the Cossack regiments: Kerensky had been arrested: Korniloff had been stopped and was being brought to the capital as a prisoner of war. Everybody had their own version, and they all declared that they had received their information from a reliable source. And it was not till my father at last got back from the Foreign Office that we really knew what was the truth—that the rivalry between Kerensky and Korniloff had come to a definite split that might lead to civil war.

The next morning the special edition of the papers published a telegram of Kerensky's proclaiming himself Dictator and commanding Korniloff to resign at once. My father came back very late from the Foreign Office, and sitting down at luncheon announced briefly that my mother

and I must leave Petrograd at once, that Korniloff had got as far as Luga, where all the troops were joining him, and that he was now advancing on Petrograd. Arrangements had been made by the Government to convey all the diplomatic body to a place of safety out of the town, and there was to be a meeting of all the heads of Missions that afternoon to discuss the question whether they should avail themselves of these facilities or not.

'Do you yourself mean to go?' my mother asked, and when my father answered that in any case he meant to stay on, she said that she meant to stay too. My father gave in to her but persisted in his determination that I must leave, and seeing that for the moment it was no good arguing, I said I would try and make arrangements to do so.

All the afternoon contradictory reports kept on coming in. Korniloff's army was said to have got as far as Gatchina, and meanwhile in Petrograd the workmen were arming. On the Tuesday morning things were still in the same state, but the Government, recovering a little from the panic of the first hours, were assured now that Korniloff would not succeed. Motors full of soldiers, machine-guns, and ammunition passed through the town and out towards Czarskoe. Now and then a

regiment with heavy artillery marched down the streets, watched by a silent crowd who were still uncertain with which side their sympathies lay. Posters had been stuck up all over the town declaring Korniloff a traitor to the Revolution, but on the whole popular sympathy swayed more in his direction, and on the Tuesday evening there was still a certain conviction that he would win, people declaring that all the troops sent out against him were going over to his side.

A certain amount of alarming reports were still being circulated, one being that Korniloff meant to bombard Petrograd with heavy artillery, another stating that his troops had got poisoned gas from a factory at Luga and were going to use that to force an entrance into the capital. Arrangements had been made to take in a lot of the English women and children into the empty Colony Hospital: a boat had also been chartered to convey some of them to a place of safety down the river. I had persuaded my father to let me remain on in Petrograd, though I promised to go to the hospital as soon as any serious trouble began.

On Wednesday morning, however, the papers published a note from the Government stating that the attempt of General Korniloff to overthrow the Revolution had failed, and my father

heard from the Foreign Office that all the troops were deserting him and joining the Government.

When I went out that afternoon a dead gray calm lay over the streets, armed soldiers stood on guard everywhere, hardly any motors or carriages were circulating, the few people about wore a furtive, anxious expression, or stood together in groups talking in low, mysterious voices. And everybody had a different theory, a different explanation. One man I met who was employed at the Foreign Office, raised his shoulders and spread out his hands, 'It's all over,' he told me. 'Korniloff has given himself up. The whole thing has fizzled out.' Another man assured me in a whisper that we knew only one side of the question and that the Government were keeping back the true facts of the case. Still a third man, a young Russian officer working in the Staff, laughed at everything—'Over? Not a bit of it. The Government, of course, pretended that they had won the day, but Korniloff's troops had taken Balagoi, which cut Petrograd off from getting any food supplies, and meant he could starve out the capital. It was quite impossible that he should fail.'

So for two more days we continued in this state of uncertainty, different reports coming in at every moment, till on the 6th came the official announcement that General Alexieff had arrived

at headquarters to take up the post of commander-in-chief, and that General Korniloff, Loukhomsky, and Romanovsky had been placed under arrest.

So intricate and contradictory are the workings of the whole plot that it is almost impossible to know what really happened or what is the exact truth. Already for some time past there had been vague talk of a counter-Revolutionary party who intended to overthrow the Government and dissolve the Soviet, but whether Korniloff had any sympathy with them is very much to be doubted.

What seems, however, certain is that, fearing a Bolshevik rising, the Government negotiated with Korniloff to send troops up to Petrograd to quell the insurrection under the command of General Krimoff. Then M. Vladimir Lvoff, former Procurator of the Holy Synod, arrived at headquarters, authorised by his own account to discuss the situation with General Korniloff and come to an agreement as to the formation of a stronger Government. Did he wilfully exceed his powers? Or only inadvertently make the mistake that brought about such a disaster? According to the statement made by Monsieur Savinkoff he was authorised to lay three propositions before General Korniloff. The first being that he should form a Government with Kerensky as Minister of Justice and Savinkoff

as Minister of War. The second that he should declare himself Dictator. The third that he, Kerensky, and Savinkoff should form a Triumvirate having equal powers of government. General Korniloff adopted the third proposition, and Monsieur Lvoff returned to Petrograd charged with his answer. But, whether intentionally or by mistake, he informed Kerensky that Korniloff had chosen the second proposition. Doubting the possibility of such an answer, Kerensky connected himself by wireless with the Stavka and asked General Korniloff whether he confirmed the message Monsieur Lvoff had delivered. Believing the question to refer to the proposed Triumvirate General Korniloff replied in the affirmative, but Kerensky did not at once break with him, and it was only under pressure from M. Nekrassoff, Minister of Ways and Communications, that he eventually decided to treat Korniloff as a traitor and demand his instant resignation. This sudden distrust and change decided General Korniloff to act alone, and he ordered his troops to advance on Petrograd. Had he led them in person, the ultimate result might have been very different, but he remained at headquarters to direct operations, and unfortunately did not take the troops into his confidence. The soldiers believed they were going to quell a Bolshevik insurrection, and

when they came near the capital and found that they were to fight against the Government declared that they had been ordered to advance under false pretences. Bolshevik propaganda spread its insidious reports among them—Korniloff was a traitor and a spy; he had committed suicide; he was plotting against the Revolution. Swayed this way and that, the troops wavered, and at last, turning against their officers, refused to advance.

XXIII

A SOLDIER

ONCE again stillness and monotony—or so it seemed after the suspense and uncertainty of those days! And the summer had died with a tragic suddenness. A cold, bleak wind ruffled the waters of the Neva, sea-gulls wheeled and flashed white wings against a dull, gray sky. For a day or two the trees in the Summer Garden glowed the colour of amber and gold and red, only to fall all too quickly, whirled in circles across the dead, brown grass, leaving bare, dark trees to wave skeleton arms in the wind.

And it seemed that with Korniloff's downfall the glory of the Russian army was gone for ever, that nothing was left of it but a rabble of dirty, disorderly soldiers who spent their days slouching forlornly about the streets, taking free rides in trams, stealing and drinking whenever the opportunity offered. Only now and then one of the old soldiers would come to us either at the Embassy or at my mother's Red Cross store, and tell us with tears in his eyes that he had rather have

been killed by the Germans than live to see the shame of his country. Most of these men were soldiers of the old army who had been prisoners in Germany and been sent back to Russia as helpless cripples. I saw a good many of them, and, as far as my Russian would permit, talked with them and got to know the attitude of their minds. I think perhaps a sketch I wrote at this time will show more clearly than any other explanation what it was.

'He had been taken from his little brown village far away in the wilds of Siberia to fight in a war whose cause and reason he did not understand, whose aims achieved would never perhaps make much difference to him, for a Liberty he personally would never profit by. Nevertheless, because he was told that it was a good war he was ready to come, and because he was told to hate the Germans he did so to the best of his ability—and anyhow he was told that he was fighting for his Emperor and therefore he asked no more.

'He had been made to march for miles and weary miles over impassable roads in boots that made his feet raw and blistered. He had stood for days in a frozen trench in a cold that pierced and cut like a hundred knives. Once he had been wounded, had been jolted in intolerable agony in a springless

cart, had lain on straw in a ward so crowded that the sister had no room to pass between him and his neighbour. She had been an angel of goodness that sister, her young face drawn by an unbearable weariness; but what could she do when in that huge, barn-like ward more than seventy voices called on her unceasingly, begging her to ease their pain. His bandages had become a hard weight of blood soaked linen, but when he begged her to give him fresh ones, she shook her head, her eyes full of tears. "How can I do it?" she had answered. "No new supply of bandages has come to us, and we have nothing—nothing." Then a man raving in fever had called to her and she had hurried away, and he could only lie and watch her, and hope that perhaps in passing she would lay a hand for a moment on his head, or bring him a longed-for cup of tea.

'Nevertheless, he had got slowly better, had been sent out again to join his regiment, had retreated with them step by step, fighting desperately, stubbornly, heroically, till he had no cartridges left, and they told him there were no more to be had.

'He had no clear recollection of being wounded that second time. He only remembered waking up to an unbelievable pain, seeing German uniforms round him, hearing German voices. They told

him, smiling, that the Russians had been beaten, that a whole division had been cut up, and that his General was a prisoner like himself. Through the agony that wracked him he longed to strike at their red, leering faces, but he was too weak to even as much as lift a finger, and could only drift off again into a confused dream of pain.

'Days and weeks and months had dragged themselves away in a weary eternity of suffering. He had watched others die to right and left of him and had wished that he could die too. Then, when he thought of the young wife he had left behind in the far-away Siberian village, he was sorry. Did she think he was already dead since she had not heard from him for so long a time? Or did she perhaps still pray for him in the little white church with its bright blue roof. She had promised to burn a candle every week for his safety before the ikon of his Patron Saint. Did she still keep that promise? Perhaps a child had been born since they took him away. He wondered was it a girl or a boy.

'And still the monotonous months passed on and summer became winter, and winter passed into spring, and presently they moved him to another hospital in a prison camp. They told him that his leg would always be a useless, shrivelled thing; that one day, when his turn came, he would

be returned to Russia in exchange for some crippled German.

'There were English and French, too, in this prison camp, herded together, given only filthy food to eat, kept in intolerable dirt and damp. Illness and disease raged, and again he watched many comrades die, and very nearly died himself. But now he clung on to life with all the feeble strength left in him. He wanted to get back to Russia. Perhaps in spite of his shrivelled leg they would let him fight again. He understood the meaning of the war more fully now. With all his heart he hated the Germans—and dimly his brain grasped what it would mean if they were not beaten.

'And then when another winter was through, when he had nearly lost all hope, they came and told him that his turn had come—he was to be sent back to Russia.

'Of the journey he remembered very little. Ill and intolerably weak as he was, it was just a confused passing of many new impressions that left him dazed and bewildered.

'And when at last he arrived at the capital he had never seen and was taken to a hospital with big white wards, they told him of the wonderful change that had come to Russia, of the Freedom that meant the birth of a new day. They told

him that the Government had been replaced by men ready to give their lives for the good of the people, and the soldier, lying on his narrow bed and remembering many wrongs, cheered feebly. Then they told him that the Emperor had abdicated and that Russia was now a Republic, and when, not understanding the word, he asked, "Who then is Czar?" they answered laughing that there was no Czar, and never would be one again. And he was silent, frowning a little, trying to adjust his mind to these new ideas—Russia without a Little Father!

'The want of proper food, neglect and bad treatment, had left him terribly weak, and he was a long, long time getting better, but at last he was able to crawl about the ward, and still later they told him that he might go out, and hobbling painfully on crutches, he dragged himself about the town, looking at everything with puzzled eyes.

'Everywhere the streets were crowded with lounging, idle soldiers, leaning against the walls and doorposts, standing in groups round some shrieking orator. And everywhere the murmur of talk was, "Down with the war—why should we go on fighting when we can have bread and land and liberty without doing so any more? We have suffered and starved for three years and have gained nothing. Our brothers have

been killed, our women and children have died—and for what reason? For whom?"

'Leaning on his crutches the soldier listened and frowned. "No, no," he said quickly, "no, brothers, you are wrong. Have we not signed treaties with England and France and are they not fighting with us? How can we make peace without them?"

'One or two men in the crowd paused uncertainly, but the man who had been speaking threw out his hands, "The Allies—well, let them go on fighting—is it not so, comrades? The treaties were made by the old Government—signed by the old Autocracy that now no longer exists. They were destroyed in the glorious dawn of the Revolution—therefore they are no longer valid."

'And the crowd cheered the plausible argument they only half understood, and the soldier turned wearily away down the gray street to the hospital. He had given of his youth and strength; he was crippled and broken and ill; there was no Little Father now to want his service—there was nothing left to fight for.

'A gust of wind flapped the grimy red flags hanging over the doors, a few drops of rain drove into his face, from the distance came the echo of some band playing the "Marseillaise."'

XXIV

AUTUMN, 1917

MEANTIME the Germans gained ground steadily and the retreat of the Russian army had become a flight, and when at the Democratic Conference Kerensky announced that the German Fleet was in the Baltic, the news was enthusiastically cheered by the Bolshevik members.

Reval was now in the gravest danger, and Petrograd itself was hardly safe. On the 13th of October the Germans landed troops on the islands of Oesel and Dago; the Admiral of the Baltic Fleet, who had been elected by the sailors, made mistake after mistake; people began to talk of a possible bombardment of Petrograd from the sea; others made elaborate calculations as to how long it would take the Germans to reach the capital if they continued advancing and the Russians continued retreating as they were doing at that moment.

Everybody who could go was leaving. Nearly all the women and children of the British Colony

were being sent away, though several wives refused to leave their husbands and preferred to stay on, braving the discomforts and hardships of daily life in Petrograd. It was a tragic breaking-up of little homes, a constant bidding farewell to those who were going, leaving behind all the associations of their childhood, all the treasured possessions of many years of work and pleasure. Every Sunday the church on the English Quay got emptier, every Monday the work party at the Embassy got smaller.

The shadow of the Revolution spread over small and great, rich and poor, bringing with it not the Glory and Liberty it had promised, but ruin and disgrace, famine, poverty, destruction.

And still the Germans advanced, and the question, 'Are the Government going to evacuate Petrograd?' was asked every day with greater insistence, while every day a different decision was published in the papers, only to be contradicted in the evening.

Secretly we were told that it was very likely we should have to move to Moscow. Arrangements were being made to put up the various Foreign Missions, and Prince Yusupoff's palace was to be placed at the disposal of the British Embassy.

Meanwhile barges and motor-lorries were filled with treasures from the Hermitage and other museums, and old papers and ciphers from the

various Ministries. And it is possible that they were packed with more haste than care, for one of the barges in front of the Winter Palace, filled with papers from the Foreign Office, was so heavily weighted that it sank before it ever got away. 'What can one do?' the soldiers said as they watched it go without making a movement to save it. 'Nitchevo,' and shrugging their shoulders they moved slowly on down the Quay.

It was one of these days that we dined at the French Embassy to meet Monsieur Maklakoff, who had just been appointed Ambassador to Paris. It was, I remember, a very interesting dinner—interesting to watch at least—one of those dinners when perhaps the women got rather neglected and the men stood about in groups talking in low voices and with grave, preoccupied faces, when the very air seemed heavy with the weight of great political questions, that, hanging in the balance, left the fate of nations undecided. Monsieur Tereschenko was dining there too, and after dinner I sat in my little corner and watched him standing over by the big fire-place in deep conversation with Monsieur Maklakoff. I knew just a little of the subject that was under discussion, but it was not only that that kept me enthralled, but the picture those two men made in the vast, red drawing-room, and the sudden

sense of my own enormous unimportance, of the littleness of human life in general as compared to the significance of these days we live in. If I shut my eyes I can still see that big red room with its glass chandeliers and formal gold furniture, the group of women sitting somewhat disconsolately over by the windows, with two of the French secretaries trying to make up to them for the lengthiness of the evening, the French Ambassador in one corner in deep conversation with my father, and in the centre of the room those two men, both representing in their different ways the power and genius of Russia—not the Russia of Rasputin, Nihilist bombs, and champagne-drinking aristocracy, nor yet the Russia of chaos, dirt and disorder, or Bolshevism, but the Russia that can still boast her great men and brilliant thinkers, the country that holds all those who love her with a chain that neither absence or distance can break.

The conversation ended at last, and, coming across to me, M. Maklakoff sat down beside me with a little sigh. 'I've had enough of politics for this evening,' he said, his deep-set, very bright blue eyes smiling at me. 'To-morrow I am going to Moscow and——' But he had not done with politics yet, and I was not to know what he was going to do in Moscow, for at that moment the French Ambassador came up and carried him off

to another corner to enter into a long whispered conversation. He left about a month later for Paris, but he had hardly arrived there when the Government he was to represent was deposed and the country he so much loved fell into the hands of the rabble who called themselves idealists and patriots. Looking back now I am even more grateful than I was at the time for his unfailing kindness to me on those rare occasions when I met him, and I would like to be able to tell him how very deeply I appreciate it. One of Russia's greatest politicians and orators, I hate to think how he must suffer in his country's tragedy and temporary disgrace in the eyes of the world—a world that is always so ready to judge by effects and so seldom stops to consider causes and reasons.

Autumn was beginning to pass into winter; the Democratic Conference was held without any very great results and passed a number of contradictory resolutions, in spite of which, however, a Coalition Government was formed. A little later the Provisional Council was opened to act as a buffer between the Soviet and the Government, and was hoped would prove successful in bridging over the gulf between the two.

Meanwhile Kerensky's popularity was increasingly on the wane. His arrogance had set people against

him; all sorts of stories as to his mode of life in the Winter Palace were afloat in the town. The part supposed to have been taken by him in the affair of General Korniloff was also severely criticised, and when he made his speech at the opening of the Provisional Council the feeling of the house was nearly all against him.

Nevertheless his power of oratory and the force and sincerity of his words carried his hearers away in a burst of renewed enthusiasm. An article in one of the papers describing the scene holds him up to ridicule as aping Naploeon, who had not this fluency of language but who knew how to act, and, bitterly attacking him for the conceit of the two aid-de-camps standing rigidly to attention behind him, has yet at the end to concede to him the victory of having convinced his audience of his integrity, and having scored a big personal success by a wonderful piece of oratory.

It was decided at this time that Russian delegates were to take part in the conference of the Allies in Paris. Monsieur Tereschenko was to go at the head of the delegation and my father was to accompany him.

Even the thought of coming back to England could not do away with the pang I felt at leaving Petrograd. Although our absence was only supposed to last six weeks I had the feeling that once

we left we should not come back, and everywhere and in everything there was the certainty of some further cataclysm or crisis approaching, and curiosity made me want desperately badly to be there when it happened. There was, too, such a lot of work to be done. The hospital and the refugees were things of the past, but my mother's Red Cross store kept us busy three afternoons a week, while every morning one or two of the English ladies who were left came to the Embassy to make the pneumonia jackets, foot-bags, eye-pads and other bandages and dressings that were needed to keep it going. The Russian Red Cross was becoming daily worse off for every kind of requisite, and the doctors and sisters from all the hospitals in the town came to our little store begging for splints, a few bandages, some aspirin, anything we could give them.

An old wine shop had been given us by the authorities, and the shelves were filled with the stores and provisions that had been sent out from England and the various medical dressings that were made in the Embassy. It was very hot in summer and very cold in winter, but as a child I had loved playing at shopkeeping, and I always had rather the feeling that this was a kind of grown-up game, though certainly it entailed a fair amount of hard work unpacking the cases

from England, making assortments of the various things wanted for the different hospitals, and packing the cases that were to be sent to them.

On October 21 M. Tereschenko made a speech at the Provisional Council in which he firmly withstood the claim of the Soviet to be represented at the Paris Conference by a delegate who would have an equal right with himself, and insisted that he, as head of the delegation, must be the sole mouthpiece of the Russian people, though the representative of the democratic organisations who was to accompany him would be free to express his views to him personally. As a result of this speech M. Tereschenko was bitterly attacked by all the extremist papers, and it seemed for a time even doubtful whether he would stay in office. Finally, however, his firmness carried the day, and the date of our departure was fixed for the 4th of November.

So violent, however, was the feeling of the Socialist party against M. Tereschenko and his mission that four days before we were to start he received a warning that the train would be stopped near Helsingfors and that he would be arrested and not allowed to proceed, and our journey was accordingly put off for a few days.

XXV

THE BOLSHEVIKS STRIKE

On and off for the last weeks a Bolshevik rising had been spoken of as being likely to take place at any moment, but when my father urged Kerensky to take strong measures against them he replied that the Government could not take the initiative, but that they had forces enough on their side to suppress any rising should it take place.

The first sign that they were really expecting trouble was on Saturday, November 3, when about ten Cadets of the Military School arrived unexpectedly at the Embassy, saying that they had been sent to guard the building. We were already more or less packed up for our journey to England, which had been put off now from the fourth to the eighth of November, so we had some difficulty in preparing rooms and beds at a moment's notice; however, we managed finally to provide accommodation of sorts.

The Bolsheviks were supposed to be going 'to do something'—nobody quite knew what—on the

Sunday, but as usual when one was prepared for all sorts of tremendous things nothing happened at all, and the day passed perfectly quietly with no sign of trouble or disturbance.

On Monday Monsieur Tereschenko, Tretiakoff, and Kornavaloff were coming to luncheon. At about ten minutes to one we noticed a sudden wild excitement among the Cadets, and presently one of them came to tell my father that they had just had a telephone message from a reliable source saying that the Soviet had taken over the Government, and that all the Ministers were going, though they were to be allowed to remain in office for five more days till the new Government had been formed and elected.

While we were wondering what this could possibly mean, Monsieur Tereschenko and Kornavaloff were announced. My father told them of the report he had just heard, and they laughingly answered that the announcement of the fall of the Government was perhaps slightly premature. They seemed perfectly confident that they would be able to deal with the Bolsheviks should they really attempt a rising, and yet one had the feeling that there was something behind that they did not wish us to know, some anxiety of which they did not speak but hid under an air of quiet assurance.

Looking back on that luncheon now one wonders why we did not feel more clearly the shadow of coming disaster and tragedy. Anxious we may have been, and yet we talked and made plans that were never to be realised, and discussed our journey to England with Monsieur Tereschenko as if it was an assured fact, though I remember that when my father said to him, 'I shan't believe we are really going till we are in the train,' he answered half laughingly, 'I shan't believe it till we have crossed the Swedish Frontier.'

That was the last time we saw Monsieur Tereschenko, and though he has now escaped from prison he went through experiences there that must have made a lasting impression on him. Tall, dark, and clean-shaven, he might almost have passed for English, save for the way his long-shaped eyes were set, and indeed he spoke English without the trace of a foreign accent, and French with a perfection that is very rarely heard. Young as he was he had held the difficult post of Minister of Foreign Affairs with a wonderful endurance and concentration of effort, and had his advice been followed more often it is possible that the Revolution might have yielded some of those great things that had been expected of it.

That afternoon the town seemed perfectly quiet and normal, but at about six o'clock a friend

telephoned to us warning us that there was to be a big armed demonstration of the Bolsheviks during the night, and that all the lights in the town were to be cut off at eight o'clock. And a little later one of the Cadets again came to my father to tell him that they had heard from the Cadets who were guarding Monsieur Tereschenko that they had received orders not to defend him but to give him up without resistance to any armed force that might come to arrest him.

My father accordingly sent round one of the secretaries to warn him of his danger, and having prepared candles and electric torches we waited for further events.

The feeling that at any moment all the lights might go out and the town be plunged in darkness was a little uncomfortable; however, again nothing happened. The Bolshevik demonstration was countermanded, and in the early hours of Tuesday morning the Government, taking a firm line, seized the printing presses of some of the Bolshevik newspapers, and also passed the decision to arrest the members of the Revolutionary Military Committee that had been formed by the Soviet.

Our boxes were nearly all packed now, our tickets were taken, and the arrangements for our start on Thursday morning were completed. Nevertheless on the Tuesday evening we began

seriously to doubt whether we should really get off. We had been to the Red Cross store as usual in the afternoon, and everything then seemed fairly quiet and normal, but just after we got back we had a telephone message to say that the Nicholas Bridge was up and that fighting had begun on the Weyborg side; and a few minutes later somebody else telephoned to say that the Soviet had passed a resolution to arrest all the Ministers and form a new Government.

No lamps had been lit in the streets. In the grim, bleak light of the winter evening a mass of people poured across the Troitzky bridge, cab-drivers whipping up their tired horses to a frantic gallop, motors hooting desperately, tram bells clanging. Rumours had spread through the town that all the bridges were to be taken up. The shops had been closed an hour earlier than usual, and business people, peaceable citizens, women and children were hurrying to get home before the trouble started. Here and there sullen soldiers, armed with rifles and bayonets, stood and watched the passing crowds, or a workman, his gun slung over his shoulder, jeered savagely as he pushed his way among them. And gray in the gray light the Fortress frowned from the opposite shore, and gray on the gray river thin blocks of ice floated down towards the sea, while little

half-frozen flakes of snow drifted down from the leaden clouds.

By eight o'clock in the evening the streets were absolutely deserted, only now and then small companies of soldiers or two or three armed workmen hurried past. A dead stillness seemed to brood over everything, a stillness that seemed to be alive with whispers, and shadowy figures, and dim, muffled footsteps.

All during the evening various rumours came in, and at midnight a friend telephoned to say that the Government had fallen, a report that was confirmed in the early morning, when my father also heard that the entire garrison had gone over to the Bolsheviks.

The Ministers were said to be hiding in the Winter Palace, and my father was told that he could not possibly see Monsieur Tereschenko, and that our journey to England was definitely put off. A little later we heard that Kerensky had managed to escape in an American motor and was supposed to have driven as far as Luga, where he had boarded a train and gone on to Pskov to join the troops that were being collected there for the defence of the Government. 'Now he has his chance,' everybody said, 'and can march triumphantly into Petrograd and save the Revolution.'

All during that day there was a certain amount

of firing going on in the streets, and armoured-cars and motor-trollies full of soldiers were dashing about, but on the whole the Bolsheviks met with hardly any resistance at all, and by the time darkness fell the town was more or less in their hands, with the exception of the Winter Palace, which was being guarded by some of the Cadets and a company of the Women's Battalion.

A little before nine I thought I heard the sound of firing in the distance, but, when I said so, the English officer, who was sitting in my room at that moment, answered that it was only the trams on the bridge. The words were hardly out of his mouth when the sudden boom of a big gun shook the windows, and somebody in the street cried out some unintelligible words. 'I expect they're firing at the Winter Palace,' the English officer said, 'I'd better go and see.' He clattered out of the room, and, left alone, I went to the window to try and make out what was happening in the darkness outside. A little group of people I could dimly make out near the corner of the bridge scattered hastily as the red flash of one of the Fortress guns lit up the river and made the darkness seem even more intense as the thunder of the report died away into silence.

We heard presently that they were attacking the Palace from all sides, and had brought up two

or three light cruisers as well that were firing at it from up the river. By the noise they were making it sounded as if nothing very much would be left of it, but a good many of the shots were only gun-cotton, and the firing in all cases was so inaccurate that the Palace was only hit three times from the river side, though on the side of the Square the whole building was riddled with bullet-holes from machine-guns and rifles. A good many shells were supposed to have fallen in the town though not much damage was done, and though the Ministers did not finally surrender till two in the morning, the actual bombardment of the Palace ceased at about eleven.

The Women's Battalion fought heroically till the last, though luckily they did not suffer any very severe casualties. Many stories concerning the siege were circulated later on, but where so much was untrue, it is difficult to know what really was the truth. It was believed, however, that there was a Bolshevik agent inside the Palace who gave out false orders supposed to come from the Ministers, and finally opened the doors leading into the Hermitage, letting in the crowd of soldiers and sailors, who swept through the gorgeous apartments, destroying everything as they went.

The Ministers had all been sitting in one of the inner rooms of the Palace, and one can imagine

what those hours of waiting must have meant to them, and what their feelings must have been as they heard the rabble drawing ever nearer through the silence of the empty rooms.

Arrested in no gentle way, they were forced to walk on foot to the Fortress through a jeering crowd who jostled and pushed and shrieked out threatening insults as they passed.

XXVI

THE BOLSHEVIKS IN POWER

On Thursday, November 8, the fighting seemed to be over. The Ministers were prisoners in the Fortress, the Bolsheviks, for the moment at any rate, were complete masters of the situation, and the whole town was in their hands.

The normal life of the town continued as if nothing much had changed, though most faces wore an anxious, hunted expression, and soldiers and armed workmen filled all the streets. It was rumoured that Lenin had made himself head of the new Government, and that Trotsky was to be made Commissary of the Foreign Office. Very often we had half-jestingly spoken of such a possibility, but now that we were faced with it as almost a fact it seemed beyond belief. It could not possibly last. Petrograd itself might perhaps be forced to submit to such a rule for a short time, but that the whole of Russia should be governed by such men was not credible.

In the afternoon two officers who had been

instructors of the Women's Battalion came to my mother with tears in their eyes to beg her to exert her influence and save a hundred and seventy of these women who had been taken prisoner the night before in the Winter Palace, and were now being kept in the barracks of the Grenadier regiment, where they were being brutally treated by the soldiers. General Knox at once went to the Smolny, which had become the headquarters of the Bolsheviks, and succeeded after some difficulty in extracting a promise that the women should be treated as prisoners of war and have a proper guard placed over them. Later even, owing to his intervention, the women were all released, and allowed to rejoin the rest of their battalion just outside the town.

On November 9 Kerensky's army was at Gatchina, and late that night there were reports that all the armoured-cars had joined him and that fighting had begun. In Moscow, meanwhile, the Bolsheviks were supposed to have taken possession of the Kremlin, which was being besieged by the Cadets of the Military Schools, and the whole town was said to be in a state of indescribable confusion, all the streets barricaded, and fighting in progress everywhere.

General Knox and Major Thornhill were living in the Embassy again, and people were very nervous

as to what would happen should Kerensky's army gain an entrance, as they feared that the crowd might then turn against the aristocracy. Trotsky had ordered out all the workmen to dig trenches, and two more destroyers had come up from Kronstadt for the defence of the capital, and one had anchored just below the Troitzky bridge: a gray, vicious-looking shape on the gray waters, with guns bristling in all directions.

Trotsky had now officially taken possession of the Foreign Office, but the staff of the Ministers all refused to work for him, and the lady clerks employed there all gave in their resignation, saying they did not wish to be under a German. All the other Ministries followed the example of the Foreign Office, and the Commissairie of the Bolshevik Government arriving to take up office found only empty rooms to receive them.

People confidently expected Kerensky to enter the capital on Sunday, November 11, and on Saturday evening it was believed that the bombardment of the besieging army had already begun, people delcaring even that shells had fallen on the Baltic Station. On the Sunday morning the Committee of Public Safety, composed of the political groups who had broken with the Bolsheviks, believing Kerensky's troops to be surrounding the town and his success and triumphal entry

assured, encouraged the Cadets of all the Military Schools in Petrograd to take the offensive against the Bolsheviks.

Early on Sunday morning, therefore, one of the Generals in the Astoria arrested the military guard placed there by the Bolsheviks, and the Cadets took possession of the hotel. In the afternoon, however, the Bolsheviks brought up armed forces against it, and after some fierce fighting retook it. Very much the same thing happened at the Telegraph and Telephone Stations, which were taken by the Cadets in the morning and retaken by the Bolsheviks in the afternoon, the boys who were heroically defending them being murdered in the most brutal way.

At half-past five that afternoon the Square in front of the Embassy was cleared and closed to all the traffic, and several cannons were placed on it, trained across the Champ de Mars on to the beautiful old Inginernaia Palace where a good many of the Cadets had taken refuge. They were given twenty minutes in which to surrender, and finally deciding to do so, were taken off to the Fortress. The Vladimirsky Military School just across the river had held out against a heavy bombardment from early in the morning till three in the afternoon, when it finally had to surrender, a great many of the Cadets being killed.

All over the town these boys, who had sacrificed so much, were being hunted by the mob of soldiers and workmen, and the sufferings some of them had to endure do not bear thinking of. Many of them were thrown from the roof of the Telephone Office. In one place a few of them managed to get away in an armoured-car, which, however, broke down and was surrounded by the crowd, who pulled the boys out and brutally murdered them. One found refuge in a small hotel, but, being discovered, was murdered in his bed, and the whole building ruined and pillaged. An English governess who worked with my mother told us several days later how the only son of the family she was with had gone out on that Sunday afternoon with no other intention but that of taking a walk, and two days later his body was found in a canal covered all over with wounds.

The Embassy itself was seriously endangered by the Cadets who were supposed to be there as guard, and who, having imprudently shown themselves at the windows, were seen by the crowd, who exclaimed: 'There are some of them; let us go and kill them.' On the Monday afternoon, therefore, they were all smuggled out of the house in disguise, and all arrived safely at their destinations, though two of the boys escaping from the French Embassy were discovered and killed on the way.

The hopes that Kerensky would effect an entrance were dwindling hour by hour. In Moscow the fighting was still continuing, and, though there had been a time when the troops of the Provisional Government were said to be winning, the Bolsheviks seemed now again to be gaining the upper hand. Cut off completely as we were news was difficult to obtain, but there were reports that there had been some heavy fighting between Kerensky and the Bolsheviks at Czarskoe. Wild rumours were about also that Korniloff had escaped, and that he and Savinkoff were now at the head of the troops, that Kerensky had been murdered, that Korniloff and Kaledin were marching on the town at the head of an enormous army.

But out of all these conflicting stories one thing stood clear. Kerensky had failed. Had he marched straight on Petrograd success would almost certainly have been his. But having got as far as Czarskoe he hesitated, stopped to parley and argue, wishing to stand well with both parties, feared to strike a decisive blow, and so was driven back at last as far as Gatchina.

On the Monday evening some of the English Military Missions received a warning coming from two private sources that the crowd meant to come and attack the Embassy that night. We were supposed to know nothing about it, but I think

we all had very shrewd suspicions that something unusual was the matter. Several English officers were got in as an extra guard, and arrangements were made with the English Military Club in the Millionaia to call them up in case of need. The night, however, passed quite peacefully, something evidently having happened to change the intended programme, and the next two days also were uneventful, though on the Tuesday afternoon the traffic of the whole town was disorganised, while all the bridges were opened to allow four destroyers up the river as far as Smolny. Manned by a scallywag crew of indescribably dirty workmen and sailors they steamed slowly past, their guns menacingly trained on the town, while all along the quays a crowd stood to watch them—fear, distrust, and suspicion in their eyes. Nobody knew quite what their object was. Some said it was to fire on Kerensky's troops from the rear. Others affirmed that they were to guard the Smolny, others again said they were going to fire indiscriminately into the town on the smallest hint of any disturbance.

Order had been more or less restored in the town now, though a certain amount of desultory shooting was in progress. A Cadet walking along the Quay was shot dead by two workmen who happened to be passing at the same moment, and

who walked on unconcernedly as if nothing had happened. And a petty officer was also murdered just in front of the Embassy on the Wednesday morning, the excuse being given that he had refused to give up his sword to three or four workmen of Trotsky's Red Guard who demanded it.

For the first few days of the Bolshevik rule food was more plentiful, and several wagons full of provisions intended for the front were handed out free to the crowd. And meanwhile promises were made of bread and peace and freedom, and the division of land.

XXVII

THE MOCKERY OF GOVERNMENT

By the end of that week it was finally clear that Kerensky's army had been beaten. Once more he had let a chance to save Russia slip through his fingers, had played with fortune and failed.

On November 16 the papers published a report of his last interview with General Krasnoff, commander of the troops of the Provisional Government, an interview where few words were wasted, where tragedy and ruin and failure must have mocked at the man who had held such tremendous power and now stood on the edge of a precipice. At three that afternoon he sent for General Krasnoff, and one can imagine the brusque, nervous manner, the white, lined face, the fierce, restless eyes that scanned the soldier's face as he greeted him: 'You have betrayed me, General. Are you aware that your Cossacks have decided to arrest me and hand me over to the sailors?'

And very quietly the General answered in the

affirmative, adding with a certain brutal directness, 'Not a soul here is in sympathy with you.'

'Not even the officers?' Kerensky asked.

The General shrugged his shoulders. 'The officers are even more against you than anybody else.'

The man to whom they were addressed must have known the truth of those words, though perhaps he had tried to cheat himself into a false hope up till now. And standing face to face with the ugly fact he could only mutter weakly, 'What am I to do then? There is nothing left for me but to commit suicide.'

One can imagine the General's gesture of contempt, the swift, vehement scorn of the rapped out advice: 'If you act like a man of honour you will leave immediately for Petrograd under the protection of the white flag. You will present yourself before the Revolutionary Council of War, and you will enter into negotiations with them as head of the Provisional Government.'

Perhaps it was then that the sudden plan for his escape flashed through Kerensky's mind, for he acquiesced with apparent submission, only categorically refusing the General's offer of an escort of sailors. He would have nothing to do with sailors. Was not Dybenko a sailor? And Dybenko was his bitterest enemy.

In despair the General raised his shoulders. 'I can do nothing to help you then. Once you have decided to play a big game you must know how to stand firm.'

Seeing in the General's impatience his hope of escape dwindling, Kerensky exclaimed swiftly, 'Yes—yes—I will go. But I will only leave at night.'

Inexorably the General refused to give his consent to this. 'And why? It will then resolve itself into a flight. Leave quietly and openly so that all the world may see you are not running away.'

And again Kerensky submitted, only begging to be given an escort of trusty men, and curtly promising to see to it, the General left him and went out to give his orders for a detachment of eight men to be formed to convey the former Commander-in-Chief and Minister President of the Russian Republic in safety to the Bolshevik Headquarters.

But that Kerensky had still some friends ready to risk everything for his sake is proved, for barely half an hour later a Cossack came to inform General Krasnoff that he had escaped, and though an immediate search was made in Gatchina and all the surroundings, no trace of him was to be found. Even the manner of his flight remained a mystery,

one report stating that he had escaped in a motor-car disguised as a sailor, and another affirming that he had got away in an aeroplane.

Now and then his name cropped up again and extraordinary stories of his adventures were told. He was supposed to be hiding in Finland. He had joined Korniloff and Kaledin in the south. A soldier had recognised him in a third-class railway carriage, and he had been killed by the crowd. He had been elected member of a town council somewhere in Siberia. He was living in Petrograd disguised beyond recognition.

And yet few people held that this was really the end. For the moment certainly his star had set, but there seemed everywhere the odd belief that he would still achieve something, and even those who hated him shared in this belief.

It was the end of a chapter, they said—rather a tragic end when one looks back to the beginning that had been so full of possibilities. Having held a popularity that was almost unequalled, a name that flashed from one end to another of a great empire, he had become an outcast and a fugitive. The crowd that had acclaimed him now jeered and mocked at his name, the Cossacks who had fought for him in July would defend him no longer, the officers would not forgive him for the part he had taken against Korniloff. The Bolsheviks

hated him because he wanted to go on with the war, his own party held him responsible for destroying the discipline of the army.

Few people now seem to remember that the famous First Prikase, which was mainly responsible for disorganising the army, was issued by the Soviet and not by Kerensky, and that each regiment had its own committee, which did not allow anything, from the most trivial everyday affair to an order from the Commander-in-Chief himself, to be carried out without having been debated on and passed by its members.

Kerensky himself made an effort that was little short of heroic to keep the army together. All through the spring he journeyed from one point on the front to another, inciting the soldiers to fight and striving to keep up their spirit by his fiery speeches and enthusiasm. It was he who led the troops to take the offensive in July, but at the same moment the German agents organised the Bolshevik rising in Petrograd and spread the report in the army that the capital was in the hands of Lenin and his party who meant to complete a separate peace.

It is certainly true that Kerensky failed, but his failure came through his weakness at striking hard at the Bolsheviks and crushing them before they became too strong to be crushed. He was a

patriot and an honest man, but he was an idealist who dreamt dreams that were too big for him, and that made him hesitate between right and wrong when a decisive action either way might have saved the situation.

No proper Government had as yet been formed in Petrograd, the Bolsheviks were quarrelling among themselves and seemed unable to come to any agreement. To give themselves importance they put out an order for the arrest of Monsieur Neratoff, former Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Trotsky declared in a public speech that the Secret Diplomatic Treaties had been stolen and hidden in the British Embassy, and added in violent language that they must be found at all costs.

The Freedom of the Press had been banned, but notwithstanding this, articles appeared day after day in many of the papers denouncing Lenin and his followers, and, if in punishment for their audacity, they were closed by an order from Smolny, they promptly appeared under another name. There is, for example, the story of one paper that began life as *The Day*, was closed by the Bolsheviks and appeared again as *The Evening*, then, being closed again, as *The Night*, a little later as *The Dark Night*, and still a little later as *Deepest Night*.

Among these articles there is one that shows

how little the people of Russia took the powers that governed them seriously, though nobody had the initiative or the power to organise some force to overthrow them. It appeared originally in the *Droug Naroda*, the *Friend of the People*, but was quoted by many of the other leading papers, and appeared in the French paper :—

'Our colleague, the *Droug Naroda*, under the signature of Zalavsky, relates with much humour and a great deal of à propos the following scene which, even if it be not strictly true, holds all the elements of an extraordinary reality. The History of Immediate Peace by the Bolsheviks would serve as a good theme for a cinema, entitled—let us say—" A Comic Hunt." Scenario—Neratoff seeks flight, Trotsky pursues him. Neratoff leaps over a barrier, Trotsky does likewise. Neratoff throws himself into the water, Trotsky promptly imitates him. Neratoff climbs on to the roofs, Trotsky follows him. Neratoff hides under a bed, Trotsky hides on top of it, and cries out, " I have him."

'Without Neratoff impossible to make peace. What a cursed imperialist. He has gone off with all our documents of Foreign Politics.

'Trotsky enters his empty office. He sits there and waits. Are the Foreign Ambassadors never going to arrive to sign the Treaty of Peace? Or

else are our trusty Red Guards never going to bring back those Secret Treaties that have so mysteriously disappeared? If only the most humble of all officials would bring me a telegram from some Foreign Power, it really doesn't matter which. Or could we not perhaps conclude the terms of peace by telephone? Not a single Ambassador, not a single official, not a single Red Guard. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a place of the dead. And are we never going to find Neratoff?

'May the devil run away with Neratoff and all his Secret Treaties, seeing that the Russia of the Bolsheviks need after all not observe them. By a new decree these Treaties shall be declared null and void, and then *vogue la galère*! After that it is only necessary to catch hold of some sort of Ambassador and sign peace. But what a strange race these Ambassadors. One hears or sees nothing of them. Ho! England, France, Germany, are you not aware that we have concluded an armistice with you? You have only to assure yourself of this fact by examining the notices stuck up on all the street corners of Petrograd, and published in all the papers. Word of honour, we Bolsheviks have made peace, and you have only to say a word to conclude the whole business.

'The Ambassadors evidently are dumb. The Governments of the Foreign Powers turn a deaf

ear, and the offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remain silent as the grave.

"'" Look here," says Robespierre Trotsky to his comrade, Marat Ouritzky, " supposing you were to go and see the British Ambassador and tell him we are ready to make peace——"

"'" Go and see him yourself," replies Marat Ouritzky. " You know quite well that his door is closed."

"'" Well, telephone to him then."

"'" The receiver has been taken off."

"'" Send him a telegram."

"'" It has already been done."

"'" Well? "

'Marat Ouritzky for all answer heaves a tremendous sigh, and Robespierre Trotsky spits furiously into a corner.

"'" Look here, Marat," says Trotsky after a short pause, " we must at all costs take up an energetic foreign policy. But how on earth do we manage it? "

"'" Publish a new decreee to arrest Neratoff," advises Ouritzky, after careful reflection.

"'" Marat, you are a fool," replies Trotsky. And then suddenly he rises to his feet, meancing, terrible, with flaming eyes. There is no doubt of it. This is Robespierre personified. " Write," he commands in a tone that dare not permit of any arguments,

" write to the British Ambassador a letter demanding an instant reply. Do likewise in regard to the Emperor of Germany. I am also going to write. The people of Russia demand an immediate peace." And in the immense building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be heard the solitary click of two typewriters. With his own hands Trotsky is leading an energetic foreign policy.'

So the mockery of Government continued, and on November 21 the French Ambassador received a note informing him that the Bolshevik Government, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, had ordered an immediate armistice on all the Russian front and intended to begin pourparlers of peace.

XXVIII

NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE

General Doukhonine, who had succeeded General Alexieff as Commander-in-Chief, receiving the telegram of the Bolshevik Government ordering an immediate armistice refused to carry out the instructions and was accordingly replaced by General Krylenko, a small, ferret-faced man who had risen from the ranks.

At the same time my father published a note in the papers remonstrating at the way the Order for the Armistice had been carried out without consulting the Allies and had been sent to Headquarters nineteen hours before it was received at the Embassy. Trotsky thereupon published an answering note saying that the Order for the Armistice and the Note to the Allied Embassies informing them of it had been sent off at the same moment, and 'if it was indeed true that the latter had not arrived at the same time this was only due to technical details that had nothing to do

with the policy held by the Council of the Commissaries of the People. The note ended in an assurance that the common efforts and the will of the people would carry out a declaration of universal peace against all Imperialistic Governments.

British subjects were now more or less prisoners in Russia, Trotsky declaring that not one of them should be allowed to leave till Petroff and Tchicherin, the two Russian Pacifists interned in England, were set free. He also threatened to arrest any British subjects carrying on what he held a Counter-Revolutionary Propaganda, and declared that, though up till now there had been no hostile demonstrations against the Embassy, he would not be answerable for the consequences if his requests to release Petroff and Tchicherin were not immediately granted.

Nearly every day threatening articles against my father appeared in the Bolshevik papers, and he was repeatedly warned that he was in danger of being arrested at any moment. And one or two members of the British Colony who were at the head of big factories were subjected to rough treatment and violent abuse from the workmen.

On December 1 the Delegates of the Bolshevik Government left for the front to begin the Peace

Negotiations, and on December 4 General Doukhonine was brutally murdered in his railway carriage as he was leaving Headquarters. People had hoped that the troops or the Staff would prove loyal and would be able to hold out against the Red Guards and troops sent down by the Bolsheviks to take possession. But General Doukhonine unfortunately hesitated to take up an armed defensive position, and having murdered him, the Bolshevik troops under the command of General Krylenko took the position of the Staff, meeting with hardly any resistance. General Korniloff, however, managed to escape with 400 men, and, evading pursuit, made his way towards the south to try and join the forces of General Kaledin.

It was said that seven German Staff officers had arrived in Petrograd and were being received and entertained by the Bolshevik Government as guests of honour. Pamphlets warning the people that they were being betrayed were thrown about the streets, but nobody had the power to do anything, and the peace negotiations continued at the front, though it was rumoured that they were not going well and that the Bolsheviks were not finding it as easy as they had thought.

On December 8 my father made the following

statement in an interview which he gave to some twenty representatives of the Press :—

'Judging by recent practice Secret Diplomacy will soon be a thing of the past, and diplomatists must therefore more than ever have resource to the Press as a channel of communication with the people. It is for this reason that I welcome your visit in order that through your kind offices I may appeal to the Russian Democracy against those who wilfully misrepresent the policy of my Government. What, you ask me, is our attitude towards Russia and how do we view the negotiations for an armistice that have been opened on the Russian front? As regards the first of these questions, I can assure you that our attitude is one of sympathy for the Russian people, worn out as they are by their heavy sacrifices in this war and by the general disorganisation that is the inevitable consequence of any great upheaval like that of your Revolution. We bear them no grudge, nor is there a word of truth in the reports that have been circulated to the effect that we are contemplating any coercional punitive measures in the event of their making a separate peace. With regard to the second question, the Council of the People's Commissaries, in opening negotiations with the enemy without previous consultation with the Allies, committed a breach of the agreement of August 23—

September 5, 1914, of which we had a right to complain. We cannot for a moment admit the validity of their contention that a treaty, concluded with an Autocratic Government, can have no binding force on the Democracy by which that Government has been replaced, as such a principle, if once adopted, would undermine the stability of all international agreements. But while we repudiate this new doctrine, we do not desire to induce an unwilling ally to continue to contribute her share to the common effort, by an appeal to our treaty rights. There are still higher principles to which we might, if we so desired it, appeal—principles, moreover, that are fully recognised by the Council of the People's Commissaries. They are those of a democratic peace, of a peace that accords with the wishes of the smaller nationalities, that repudiates the idea of extracting plunder out of conquered enemies under the name of war idemnities, or of incorporating in great Empires the territories of reluctant populations. Such, broadly speaking, is the peace which my Government, equally with the Russian Democracy, wishes to see secured to the world. The Council of the People's Commissaries is mistaken, however, in thinking that they can secure this peace by asking for an immediate armistice to be followed by an agreement. They are, if I may use a homely

expression, putting the cart before the horse. The Allies, on the contrary, desire to arrive first at a general agreement in harmony with their declared aims, and then to secure an armistice. So far not a word has been said by any German statesman to show that the ideals of Russian Democracy are shared by the German Emperor or his Government, and it is with the German Autocracy and not with the German people that negotiations for an armistice are being conducted. Is it likely that the Emperor William, when once he knows that the Russian army has ceased to exist as a fighting force, will be disposed to subscribe to a democratic and durable peace such as the Russian people desire? No, the peace which he contemplates is a German Imperialistic one. Though the Allies cannot send representatives to take part in the armistice negotiations, they are ready, so soon as a stable Government has been instituted that is recognised by the Russian people as a whole, to examine with that Government the aims of the war, and the possible conditions of a just and durable peace. Meanwhile they are rendering Russia the most effective assistance, by holding up the bulk of the German armies on their respective fronts. The important victories of the British troops near Cambrai are of good augury for the future; for this democratic peace

which we all so ardently desire will never be attained till the military power of the Kaiser has been broken.

'I have, I hope, shown how friendly are our feelings and how sincerely we desire to stand by Russia in this hour of crisis. Can, I venture to ask, the same be said of Russia's feelings towards us? Is it not a fact that hardly a day passes without some bitter attack being made on my country by what are now the official organs of the Press? To read them one would think that Great Britain and not Germany was the enemy, that Great Britain provoked the war for her own imperialistic and capitalist aims, and that she is responsible for all the blood that is being shed. I am not going to repeat the oft-told tale of the beginning of the war, I should only like to ask what would be Russia's position to-day had we not intervened when Belgium's neutrality was violated by Germany? Without the British Fleet and our newly-formed armies in which three million volunteers had enlisted, Russia would to-day be Germany's vassal and autocracy would reign surpreme in Europe. Had we stood aside there would have been no Revolution and no Liberty for the people. The German army would have seen to that, and without our co-operation Russia would never have won her freedom. Are we not therefore entitled

to claim that we should be treated as friends instead of being made the object of scurrilous attacks? In his appeal to the Moslems of the East, Monsieur Lenin spoke of us as rapacious extortioners and plunderers, while he excites our Indian subjects to rebellion. He placed us on a somewhat lower level than the Turks, to whom he would hand over Armenia, forgetting the awful massacres already perpetrated there. It is an unheard-of thing for a man who claims to direct Russian policy to use such language of a friendly and allied country. How does he think that the British tyrant enforced his will in India with 300,000,000 inhabitants? Is he aware that the British garrison which before the war amounted to 75,000 men has now been reduced to 15,000 owing to the loyal support of the Native races? Is he aware that one of our chief aims is to prepare the diverse and often hostile races for self-government, and that our own Government encourages the formation of Indian societies and committees for this very purpose? Hardly any of them are anti-British and none approach the Soviet in character.

'The position of Englishmen in this country is not an enviable one at the present moment. They are singled out for attacks and regarded with suspicion. During the seven years that I have been Ambassador here I have worked heart and

soul to bring about the closest understanding between Russia and Great Britain, but, though I have associated as it is my duty with members of all parties, I have ever since the February Revolution maintained a strictly neutral attitude. Prior to that date I did, it is true, endeavour to use my influence with the Emperor in favour of some form of constitutional Government, and I repeatedly urged him to make concessions to the legitimate wishes of the people. Now that his sovereign rights are vested in the Russian people, the latter will, I trust, pardon my transgression of the strict rules of diplomatic etiquette. I would in conclusion venture to address one word of warning to the Russian Democracy. Their leaders are, I know, animated by the desire of creating a brotherhood of the proletariats of the world in order to secure universal peace. I fully sympathise with the object they have in view, but I would ask them to consider whether their present methods are likely to appeal to the Democracies of other countries, and more especially to my own. They are creating, perhaps unintentionally, the impression that they set more store by the German than by the British proletariat. Their attitude towards us is more caculated to estrange than to attract the sympathies of the British working classes. During the great war that followed the French Revolution the

speeches delivered against Great Britain and the attempts made to provoke a Revolution in our country did but steel the resolve of the British people to fight out the war to the end and rallied them round the Government of the day. History will, if I mistake not, repeat itself in this 20th century.'

XXIX

RULE OF THE RED GUARD

And what of Petrograd, the capital, during these days? Winter had set in now. The white, pure silence of the snow covered every thing, the flag on the Fortress flew, a brilliant patch of scarlet against a steel cold sky.

Nobody troubled to clear away the snow in the streets. Little boys used the slopes of the bridges over the canals as toboggan slides, cannoning carelessly against people, utterly unheedful whether they knocked them down or not. Others again used the pavements as skating rinks, and walking in the streets became a thing fraught with many dangers, ridiculous and otherwise.

Nearly all the trams had broken down and nobody troubled to mend them. Those that remained resembled moving beehives with crowds of people hanging on all round. One had to fight to get even so much as a foothold on a step, and once having got in it was almost impossible to get out again, so tightly wedged was the crowd

at the doors. Pickpockets and thieves swarmed in them, and as there was no police one had no hope of retribution if one did have anything stolen.

Coal was so scarce that the supply of electric light had to be cut off. On certain days one was only allowed it from six to eleven in the evenings, and as one never knew which day that was to be, one ran the risk at dinner-parties of finding oneself in sudden darkness and having a general scramble for candles. And candles were also scarce and not always to be found.

Nearly every night shooting went on in the town. Nobody quite knew why. Sometimes it was just a band of robbers going round, stopping people in the streets or pillaging flats. Or perhaps the Red Guards had a difference of opinion. Or else a motor with no lights would fly through the streets with a machine-gun rattling away out of the back window, for no particular reason or object.

Committees were started in all the apartment houses. All the inhabitants of flats, even the women, had to take their turn of keeping watch during three hours of the night, either in the court-yard, or else just inside the hall. Day after day more shops were closing, either through lack of material or strike of the shop hands. Food, that for a short period after the Bolsheviks had gained

power had been a little more plentiful, was now scarcer than ever. The bread was practically uneatable. The allowance for the week was one egg, which was generally bad. Butter was almost unprocurable. Leather was so scarce that to get a pair of boots one had to have a ticket, and it was said that there was just one pair of boots for every fifty people.

One wondered sometimes was this to be the end. The great red palace riddled by bullets: the silent, empty Government buildings: the yellow and white Admiralty with the golden spire that seemed nearly always to catch from somewhere a faint gleam of sunshine. And across the white expanse of the snow-covered square, behind the pearl-like tracery of the trees in the Alexander Garden, the great, gray shadow of the dome of St Isaac's softened and dim in the opal-coloured mist. And over the frozen river the walls of the Fortress, the Cathedral with the golden tombs of dead Emperors, the spire that was like a marvellous tongue of flame, a finger pointing to Heaven. What was to happen to all these? The old majesty, the old traditions of centuries, the faith that believed in miracles—were they gone for ever? The churches were almost empty now, only here and there in the gray shadows a solitary candle burnt before a jewelled ikon, or a woman knelt

and wept before a crucifix. The old Russia was dead indeed.

I remember walking home from a dinner one evening and passing close to a barracks where a crowd of soldiers stood leaning up against the wall. From an open window a stream of yellow light blazed across the snow-covered pavement, and out into the silence of the cold, clear night came the sound of drunken song and laughter, the squeak of a concertina. Walking down the street towards us came an old General, his long beard and his white fur cap gleaming silver in the moonlight, the scarlet lining of his gray coat catching the light as he passed that open window, and not a single one of those soldiers leaning against the doorway moved out of his way or saluted; one only spat derisively on the pavement with a muttered curse. His stern old face was like a white mask of suffering, and when the English officer I was with saluted him as he passed close to us, he started as if wakened from a dream, and returned the salute with a smile that was pitiful in its pleased surprise.

That is the spirit of progress and change, the spirit of Liberty. Everywhere signs of disorder and dirt and neglect. Streets that were almost empty, shops that had no goods, churches where nobody prayed.

And at street corners companies of Red Guards sitting round huge, blazing fires, stopping every motor that passed to ask questions, and sometimes turning the occupants out if the answers did not satisfy them; ready at any moment on the slightest excuse to fire off the rifles that were tied round them with a piece of string or a dirty piece of red ribbon. These men, unkempt, unwashed, unshaved, totally ignorant, had become the rulers of Petrograd, the city built by Peter the Great as capital for his Empire.

At night it was always a somewhat eerie sensation to be stopped by these men. The red glare of the fire lighting up the blue darkness, the silence of the snow-covered streets broken by the hoarse, rough voice that commanded the motor to stop. The crowd of dirty, unkempt men swarming round the door, the points of the bayonets that caught here and there a gleam of firelight, the knowledge that at the slightest excuse they had the power to turn one ignominiously out into the street and go off themselves in the motor.

Indeed this very nearly happened to some friends and myself when one evening coming home from the ballet a shot rang out just in front of the motor. We did not realise at first that it had been fired at us, but when the motor pulled up with a jerk, and a man in a dirty fur cap, who

might have been a Red Guard or an ordinary thief, tore open the door, we saw that this time we were not to be merely spectators. How little help we could expect from anybody was also immediately clear, as people passing glanced at us nervously, and then looking the other way hurried on, while a sledge that had been standing close to the pavement drove hastily away into the darkness. Three more men with rifles now surrounded the motor, and, pointing his pistol at us, the man who had stopped us commanded us to get out at once. Mr Brooks, one of the Secretaries of the Embassy, who was with us, told him it was an English motor and tried to shut the door. But tearing it open again, the man got up on the step and pointing his pistol at Mr Brooks's head screamed out that we were to let him have the motor at once or he would shoot. With admirable presence of mind Mr Brooks argued with him that he would get into great trouble if he took the motor, as it belonged to the British Embassy and we were on Government business. The man retorted furiously that he also was on Government business, but after a few minutes more persuasion and talk he finally got off the step, and shutting the door with a bang, allowed us to continue on our way unmolested.

XXX

ANARCHY

Disorders and desultory street fighting increased day by day, and on the night of December 7 reached a culminating point when a band of soldiers and sailors broke into the Winter Palace and pillaged the wine cellars. The Preobrajinsky regiment, whose barracks were next door and who were supposed to be on guard, tried at first to put up a feeble resistance, but very soon joined in the general plunder themselves. All during the night the orgy continued, and several encounters took place between drunken bands of soldiers and sailors, and from the Embassy we heard the constant sound of firing all down the Quay and the Millionaia.

Early the next morning, the news having rapidly spread through the town, crowds arrived on the scene to try and get a little booty. Soldiers in huge motor-lorries drove up to the Palace and went away, their motors full of cases of priceless wine. Women, their arms full of bottles, could

be seen trying to sell them to passers-by in the streets. Even the children had their share of the plunder, and could be met carrying a bottle of champagne or perhaps some valuable old liqueur.

About midday an armed force of sailors and one or two armoured-cars arrived on the scene to try and restore order. The Palace was surrounded and nobody was allowed to pass anywhere near.

Thousands of bottles of wine were destroyed and thrown over into the ice, the sailors firing into the bottles the quicker to break them; but the horde of drunken soldiers was so immense that the orgy still continued without any abatement, and order only began to be restored on the arrival of a company of firemen, who flooded the cellars, and drowned a lot of soldiers who were too drunk to escape.

Even as far down the Quay as the Embassy the air was infected with the reek of spirits, and everywhere drunken soldiers lay about, broken bottles littered the streets, the snow was stained rose red and yellow where in many places the wine had been spilt. All through the town the drunken hordes spread themselves, firing indiscriminately at each other or anybody who molested them. Scenes of indescribable horror and disgust took place, the crowds in some instances scooping up the dirty, wine-stained snow, drinking it out

of their hands, fighting with each other over the remains. And everywhere the soldiers were inciting the people to murder and pillage. It was so easy—you had only to take your rifle, and everybody had a firearm of some sort—to knock down a few shutters or break a few windows and take whatever you found.

In the afternoon I drove out with a friend in one of the little low sledges and tried to do some shopping. Heavy snowflakes drifted down from an iron-gray sky, a piercing wind drove into our faces, the great dome of St Isaac's loomed up a huge shadow lost in the whirling snow. Several times drunken soldiers hailed us as we passed. On the little bridge at the end of the Millionaia a company of armed sailors stopped us and made us go down a side street into the town. The streets were practically deserted, several of the shops were boarded up, now and then the sharp crack of a rifle sounded across the distance, or the fragment of a drunken song.

At the door of one of the provision shops a huge burly Moujik wrapped in a sheepskin stopped us with an outstretched arm as we tried to pass him. 'Shut,' he said laconically.

'But why is it shut?' my friend asked impatiently, seeing a chink of light under the closed doors.

The man shrugged his huge shoulders. 'Because

it is,' he answered, standing immovable in the doorway, where we had eventually to leave him.

The red-bearded driver of our sledge grinned at us good-humouredly as we climbed back, and pulled the fur rug over us. 'Eh, Barina,' he remarked pleasantly, 'Life is not easy now. Svaboda! (Liberty). This is what they call Liberty! Eh—God help us!' He flicked the blue reins at his thin, white horse and drove on, muttering to himself all the time.

A little farther along a drunken soldier stood before one of the huge fires that burned at the corners of all the streets, a broken bottle held in one hand, a pistol in the other, while a Red Guard leaning on his gun watched him with an indulgent smile. Singing and laughing the soldier swayed, perilously near to the leaping flames, now and then pointing his pistol at the passers-by, cursing them, or laughing at them as they drew nervously away. Still a little farther along another soldier lay face down in the snow, an empty bottle still clutched in one hand, while two little boys stood nervously at a distance, and a third, more courageous, tried to loosen the fast-clasped fingers from the bottle, to see perhaps whether there were a few drops left. As Lunarcharsky, one of the Commissaries of the People, said when questioned by a

reporter, 'What would you have? The whole of Petrograd is drunk.'

And that was only the beginning. Having found how easy it was the soldiers continued to plunder the wine shops and many of the private cellars in the town. Every night there was shooting, and in some parts regular artillery duels between machine-guns took place, and though several large wine cellars were destroyed by order of the Bolshevik Government, the streets continued to be full of drunken soldiers and the orgies still went on.

Late one evening some friends, who lived a little farther down the Quay, came to seek refuge in the Embassy, as their cellars were being pillaged and the soldiers had fired into the room where they had been sitting at dinner. They telephoned from the Embassy to Smolny to ask for armed assistance, which was accordingly sent, and some time after midnight they were able to return to their house, which had been put under a strong guard.

All approaches to the Winter Palace were still barricaded and nobody was allowed to pass. Bottles of wine were sometimes to be bought in the streets for absurdly cheap prices, though one was not always sure of obtaining the real article. There is the story of one man who bought what

was supposed to be a bottle of champagne from a sailor for the sum of three roubles. Examining it closer he found it contained only Vichi water. Putting it in his pocket he continued on his way down the street, and presently, when a soldier passed him, tapped it knowingly. The soldier immediately stopped to bargain, and the man, succeeding in selling him the supposed bottle of champagne for the sum of five roubles, continued on his way.

Robbery and murder had become daily and nightly occurrences now. Constantly people were being stopped and divested of all their clothes and valuables before they were allowed to continue. It was almost quite impossible to go out at night in a motor, as one ran the almost certain risk of being stopped and turned out. Sometimes looking out of the window late at night one might have imagined oneself in a City of the Dead. The huge, empty square, white and ghastly under the light of one feeble lamp; the vast shadow of the bridge across the frozen river, by the corner of the Marble Palace; the orange glow of the fire where the forms of two or three soldiers could be seen crouching close to the flames. Now and then only the gray shadow of a sledge slipping silently across the snow or a muffled figure that passed swiftly as if it feared pursuit.

A story was told at this time of a man who was stopped by a band of thieves and robbed of his watch and money and his coat. Shivering, he said to one of the robbers, 'You might at least give me your coat in exchange. Mine was new and yours is old, and you can't want two coats.' After some hesitation the thief eventually gave him his dirty old sheepskin coat and the man hurried home, thankful of at least some covering in the cold. Arrived at his lodgings, he took off the coat, and found in the pocket what was evidently the result of the robber's day: three or four diamond rings and a sum of money far exceeding that of which he had been robbed himself.

XXXI

LAST DAYS IN PETROGRAD

On December 15 Trotsky sent round another Note to all the Embassies announcing his intention of entering into Peace Negotiations, not with the Allied Governments, but with the Socialistic parties in all countries; and meanwhile the farce of the Peace Conference continued, fluctuating, suspended, taken up again.

The Russian frontier had again been closed to English and American subjects, on the ground of a dispute concerning Government messengers. The posts were completely disorganised and hardly any news came through, and what there was in the papers was distorted to suit the Bolshevik interests. But on Christmas Day a messenger arrived from England, having just got across the frontier before Trotsky's order to stop him had been received.

Food supplies were getting scarcer and scarcer. All communications with the south had been completely cut off. The Don country was said to

be mobilised, and thousands of officers and Cadets were joining the forces of General Kaledin; and at Rostoff the Bolshevik Committee was supposed to have liberated and armed a lot of German prisoners to take part in the struggle against him and Korniloff.

The German papers had taken up a violent attitude in regard to my father's statement in the Russian Press, and said that the Entente only wished to gain time and prepare the ground for a counter-Revolution, and that my father's insinuation that the armistice negotiations were being conducted with the German Autocracy and not with the German people would fool nobody in Russia. Admiral Kaiserling and his staff had arrived in Petrograd; a whole hotel was placed at their disposal, and they were treated with every consideration and respect. The town itself swarmed with German and Austrian prisoners, walking freely and unmolested about the streets, swaggering as if they were already in possession. There is a story of a Russian girl, who, meeting several of these men, turned to a friend who was with her and said, 'Look. There are a lot of German prisoners.' One of the men turned to her with an insolent smile, 'Oh, no,' he said suavely, 'you make a mistake. It is you who are our prisoners.'

And meanwhile anarchy spread itself all over the country. In the surroundings of Petrograd and in the Baltic Provinces hardly a country house was left standing. My friend's place near Reval, where I had stayed several times, had been completely destroyed and pillaged, the horses and cows on the farm taken or killed, the pigs cut up alive for lard, while she herself barely escaped, having to hide for five hours in the gardens with her two small children. In Odessa street fighting was taking place, and the massacres of Kronstadt were being repeated in the Black Sea Fleet. In the Crimea several of the wonderful old palaces and private villas were being plundered. In Kieff there were riots and disorders. In Finland officers and Generals were brutally murdered. Many of the treasures of the Hermitage and the Winter Palace had been lost or stolen. Some of the barges in which they had been sent away from Petrograd just before the Bolshevik rising were said to have been sunk, some were supposed to have arrived at Moscow, others at Vologda, but nobody really knew or cared. Pillaging, murdering, and talking about peace were so much more important than the fate of a few Rembrandts and Fragonards.

My father had been very unwell for some time past, and at the end of December the doctor emphatically ordered him to go away at once. An

agreement had been finally come to between the British and the Bolshevik Governments regarding the question of couriers, and the messengers of the Bolsheviks were to be given passports to England on the condition that they did not stay there after delivering their despatches. Accordingly, after some difficulty and delay, Trotsky gave my father the facilities for our journey to England, though he would not allow the military and naval representatives going with us any special concessions, declaring that they must travel as ordinary passengers.

The 8th of January was settled for the day of our departure, and our last days in Petrograd passed slowly and regretfully.

The cold was intense, an icy wind swept down the quays, snow continued to fall day after day, piling itself in huge masses all down the streets. It was almost impossible for motors to get through it, and driving in a sledge down the Nevsky was like going on a mountain switchback. Bleak and gray the sky stretched itself above the town and the ice-bound river. There seemed no help anywhere against the pitiless decree that the folly of man was carrying out. The curse of an inevitable disaster hovered like a bird with giant, overshadowing wings above the country.

On one of the few remaining days I went for

the last time into the vast Cathedral of St Isaac's. In the dim, gray-shadowed darkness the tiny, yellow flames of a very few candles burnt feebly, flutteringly. The great church that had always been so full was now almost empty. Before the Miraculous Madonna of St George one old woman knelt in prayer, and two little solitary candles burnt. In another part of the church a service was going on and one or two people stood lost among the shadows, while through the jewelled doors a priest in a wonderful green robe prayed in a halo of golden light that made his figure stand out startlingly clear amidst the surrounding dark.

Going out again into the white, whirling snow-storm I walked slowly up, past the marvellous equestrian statue of Peter the Great on to the Quay. The old pink palace of Prince Menchikoff faced me on the opposite shore, and farther down the river the great gray building of the Bourse stood out, facing the bullet-scarred Winter Palace, standing out dark red above the snow.

A sense of utter desolation and tragedy lay over it all, the hopelessness of an abandoned city alive still with the memories of long dead glories, of golden pomp and revelry. Somewhere on the other side of the river the crack of a rifle broke the frozen stillness, and a workman who was

passing laughed savagely. A gust of icy wind sent a cloud of snow into my face, and a half-starving yellow dog, limping on three legs, rubbed itself against my skirt, looking up at me with piteous eyes. And through the drifting snow the ghosts of Russia's greatness seemed to pass and vanish: men and women who had lived and died for Russia, whose heads were bent under the weight of intolerable shame.

On the last night before our morning start I walked home from a dinner in the Millionaia through a stillness that held something uncanny in its voiceless quiet. The streets seemed utterly deserted, only once two workmen passed, dark, grotesque figures muffled in sheepskins, the points of their rifles black against the snow.

The heavy clouds had lifted, a few faint stars shone in the distant, blue darkness of the sky. The empty Square showed an almost untrodden purity of snow: the Fortress stood a dark shadow above the frozen river: dimly against the sky the spire of Peter and Paul reared a slender black finger, pointing to the stars.

Then the sudden roar and rattle of a motor broke the stillness; filled with a crowd of half-drunken soldiers it passed down the Quay, ploughing its way with difficulty through the heavy snow. Through the coarse, jeering laughter I

caught the words, 'Liberty—Peace—Hurrah for Peace!'

Liberty and Peace! While above the blue and silver city of dead Emperors hovered the shadow of German Autocracy and German Militarism and German power, like a great black monster ready to devour its prey.

XXXII

THE SOUL OF RUSSIA

I REMEMBER how profoundly miserable I was all that last week in Petrograd. People used to ask me, 'But surely you must be glad to get away from this desolation and chaos, to go back to civilisation and order, to clean streets, and shops and comfort?' And I could only say that 'Yes, of course I was glad to be going back to England, but——'

And then it was always so difficult to find an adequate reason to explain that 'but' when there was really no reason at all but just the indescribable ache of parting with something or somebody—and I wasn't sure which it was—that had grown wonderfully near to me.

It was Petrograd, the capital of Russia, that I hated saying good-bye to—and yet it wasn't only that. It was the whole vast country that I had never even seen, a country of wide spaces and wonderful solitudes! It was the fairy-tale palace of the Kremlin, with rose-flushed walls, and dim,

shadowy churches, and gold and silver cupolas and domes. It was the white purity of untrodden snow in those wonderful pine forests. It was the indescribable, subtle magic of long, long summer evenings. It was the unforgettable blue of that sea beyond Balaclava. It was the songs the gipsies sing round their fires in the forests, and the songs the soldiers sing as they march down the long straight roads. And even this was not all—it was the soul of the people I had grown to love even though I did not yet understand them. And it was the soldiers I had nursed those first years of the war and who had opened my eyes to something that was new and big and child-like and yet wonderfully grand in their simpleness. I had seen them suffer without complaint or question, and I had also seen them die—and they had taught me something I could not forget.

These shrieking hooligans who slouched about the streets, drinking, shooting, and marauding, were soldiers too, that was certainly a fact one could not get away from; but knowing their ignorance, one could not so much blame them as loathe and perforce admire the fiendish cleverness of the people who knew so well where Russia's weakness lay, and knew how to play upon that weakness, using it to their own best advantage and turning those gentle, patient men into utter brutes, drunk

and blind and mad with the false knowledge that had been so subtly instilled into them.

But the soul of Russia was not dead, as a letter written to my mother about a week before we left Petrograd very clearly shows. It was written from prison, but the writer has since then been released, and I hope she will forgive my publishing her letter in this book, as it illustrates better than any words of mine the feelings of all true Russians who saw their country being led to ruin and were powerless to save her: 'First of all as an introduction to this cry of my heart, an excuse for my bad English. I know your language just enough to be well aware of how very defective will be the way I can and must express my thoughts and feelings. But it mustn't stop me, and I hope you will be kind enough not to mind it. It is ever so long I had the most intense wish of coming to see you and to talk to you—you personally, because I know how kind and brave and earnest you are—but still more—excuse me for telling it quite openly—as to the one and only reachable personification of England. And for all these long months of our hopes and our work, and especially during the last weeks of our struggle, I never could make up my mind to do it. I felt it impossible to read in your looks things that you *must* have been thinking of us Russians, and that I couldn't

bear to see in eyes of strangers, though allies and friends; I would rather say, because allies and friends, and so much admired and respected friends.

'Now, since I am in prison, I have a feeling of having won a right of looking straight in the face of your country, and think it even my duty to tell you something of the feelings many, many Russian hearts are full of.

'You must know all the admiration, the love and the faith we have in the great principles of true liberty, true generosity, and true democracy we know your country is struggling for.

'You must know that all of us who simply *understand* things are your most faithful and loyal friends, that we would do *anything* to save the liberty, the happiness, the honour of our country, and that we know that it is England and France that alone would help us to it.

'You must understand that it is only our dreadful darkness—artificially cultivated for ages—that leads our people and our country away from the straight road of faith and honour, and that we are going in whole Russia through a dreadful struggle of the conscious mind against the physical, unconscious strength.

'I would willingly say, "Have patience with us," because I know truth and wisdom will conquer,

but I understand too well that "patience" for you now means lives and lives of your men, so that I must be silent. Still, every day of expectation is a day gained to our cause.

'I am looking now in the newspapers for your victories as I would for ours, and the day your armies entered so beautifully in Jerusalem was such a day of joy in my solitude! I long to stretch out my hands across all the lands and seas that lie between us and England and grasp the hand of Lloyd George. There are things that one feels so strongly no words can tell them.

'You cannot imagine how *free* one feels sitting in prison! It is such an unexpected and such a very strong feeling; the experience is worth while going through, were it only for this discovery.

'Now, when I am physically released and freed, I will certainly knock at your door, and if ever and in any way I may be useful to you personally or your country you must know I will be but too happy to give you an active (the only I care for) proof of my love to England and all the great human ideas and feelings she personifies in my conception——'

Here in England we have often talked so glibly of the 'country going to the dogs,' but I wonder if we any of us realise what it would mean if these careless words of ours came true and we saw this

England that we love in a state resembling that of Russia now.

At a Christmas party at the Embassy, when some of the English officers were singing 'God Save the King,' the man I was standing next to turned to me, his eyes full of tears: 'You don't know what it means,' he said unsteadily, 'to hear your men sing that, while we Russians have no Emperor and no country left.' I have seen a correspondent of one of the leading newspapers, looking down from our balcony on a rabble disputing over some anti-war demonstration, turn away with a tortured face, 'Ah-kak bolna' (how it hurts), I heard him whisper to himself. And some of the doctors and nurses who came to our Red Cross store have burst openly into tears. 'England sends us all these wonderful things,' they have exclaimed. 'But we don't deserve them. Surely England must hate us now.'

And in all classes one found this feeling prevalent, even down to the Isvoschiks and shop-people. For in Russia time is not of that vital importance that it is in England, and one can have long political discussions with the driver of the isvostchik that takes one into town, with the shopman who sells one a yard of ribbon, and the waiter who brings one a cup of tea. The coachmen have a happy way of driving along with the reins between their

knees, the while, twisted round on the box, they declaim with much hand-waving and shoulder-shrugging to their passenger in the cab.

I remember having one such conversation one of the last days I was in Petrograd. A driving snow-storm hid the tops of the houses in whirling whiteness, here and there at street corners fires burnt fitfully, an icy wind, that seemed to come from all directions at once, cut straight through one's furs. 'You don't like this weather?' the driver of my sleigh inquired amiably, turning round to examine my stiffly-frozen countenance.

'No, I don't,' I retorted shortly, trying to pull my collar up higher round my ears.

'Eh, eh,' he chuckled. 'But then you aren't Russian—you would get used to it in time. You are English, perhaps.'

I answered that I was, and the man shrugged his shoulders. 'But in England the climate is also bad,' he asserted. 'You have fogs there and rain, and the sun never shines.' He turned to give a flick of the reins to his tired horse and then swung round again on his seat. 'Yet they say it is better in England than here. You have order there; is it not so? And yet you have liberty. Eh, Boje Moi—Liberty! What a lot they talk of liberty! They tell us we are free now and they call us comrades——' he flung up his hands. 'And look at

the streets—full of armed men—and one can no longer be out in safety after dark. Why, only four nights ago I was nearly shot. Ey Bog Barishnia—here in the Millionaia, four Tavarische quarrelling over something. Eh, but it goes badly with us, and surely the Germans will come. God knows what will happen, but certainly the Allies will be angry with us. Is it not so? England will no longer be our friend.' Sunk into sudden gloom, he returned to a realisation of his horse which was wandering aimlessly along on its own, and sat with hunched shoulders facing the blinding snowflakes.

No—the soul of Russia was not dead; is not dead now. The soul of Russia is something neither the Germans nor the Bolsheviks can kill. Only those who have lived there know what it means, or can understand the nameless charm with which Russia holds one, the home-sickness that makes one long for her strange waywardness. I remember being often told, 'Oh, yes, you may grumble at Petrograd now, but you will want to come back. Once you have lived in Russia you will always want to come back. She will never let you forget her.'

There is a sentence in Mr Walpole's book, *The Green Mirror*, that in a way also explains this feeling: 'That country as I see it now stirs always

through the hearts of its lovers, questions about everything in heaven or earth, and then tells one at the end that nothing matters. In Russia one is so close to God and the Devil—in England there is business and common sense.'

And that is part perhaps of the spell Russia uses to keep the hearts of those who love her faithful to her. She keeps one always asking questions and smiles her wonderful enigmatic smile because one can never find the answers.

XXXIII

THE JOURNEY FROM RUSSIA

THE start from Petrograd at half-past seven that Monday morning was something like a shadowed dream. There was no electric light, here and there a candle glimmered feebly, on the top of the big stairs one little oil lamp made a glow of dim light in the surrounding darkness. The maids were all in tears, shadowy figures carrying bags and wraps hurried to and fro, the big glass doors at the bottom of the stairs were opened every moment, letting in cold blasts of icy air; outside motors puffed and snorted, and the snow lay a mantle of white silence over the town.

Then the moment came to start, to pack into the waiting motor that forced its way slowly and haltingly through the snow. In the gray, bitter darkness of that winter morning the familiar landmarks were only shadows, the vast expanse of the river, the Quay and the palaces and churches with their golden domes seemed all a blur of gray

and white, with just in the east a faint pink glow behind the clouds.

Then the bleak, dirty Finland station, the loitering, staring soldiers—a company of Red Guards jostling everybody out of their way as they slung down the platform—the little crowd of people who had come to see us off, shivering in the icy cold, stamping their feet to try and keep warm—the jerk and rattle of the train, the shrill scream of the frozen wheels, as at last it started.

Thanks to the kindness of the station-master we had managed to secure a sleeping-car to ourselves and the seven English officers travelling with us, and, having taken food with us we were fairly comfortable and the day passed quite quickly. That night we were all woken up by five or six armed soldiers who came down the corridor and demanded to see our passports, though when they opened the doors of the compartment belonging to my mother and myself they grunted out, 'Oh —only a woman,' and shut the doors again with a contemptuous bang.

The next day seemed very long. The cold was intense, the windows were so tightly frozen over that one could hardly see out, and the country seemed nothing but miles and miles of snow-covered plains, with here and there a miserable wooden village, or a forest of fir trees

Towards evening we began to realise that we were going to be very late arriving at Torneo, the frontier of Finland and Sweden, and General Knox and Admiral Stanley were doubtful whether we should be able to get across in the dark. At the station of Ullaburg the English Consul at Torneo met us, and we faced the fact that, even if we did get across the frontier that night, we would most certainly miss the train to Sweden. By the time the train started on again from Ullaburg it was so late that we gave up all idea of crossing the frontier, and when we finally arrived at Torneo at half-past twelve arrangements were made to allow us to sleep in our carriage. It was so bitterly cold that there was danger of the heating freezing, so they had to leave the engine on and shunt us about during the night in order to keep it going.

The Russian soldiers made some difficulties about passing our luggage through the Customs, but after a long wait in the dreary station at Torneo everything was finally settled and we packed into the low open sledges to drive the little way across the frozen river to the Swedish frontier, Happaranda. I don't think I shall ever forget the cold of that drive, the wind seemed to cut through one's furs as if they were absolutely non-existent. The cloudless sky had the pale blue brilliance of ice, the vast plain of untrodden snow showed no sign

of life or habitation, low down on the horizon a queer glow seemed to radiate from the sun. Somebody said it was the Northern Light, but the agony of cold was so intense that it seemed to freeze even one's eyelashes together, and the only way to find relief was to bury one's face inside one's furs and pray that it might be soon over.

After a drive of little over twenty minutes the sledge pulled up with a jerk, and with an effort we unfroze enough to get out stiffly. Pleasant-faced, carefully soaped Swedish soldiers, in attractive blue coats lined with sheepskin and white fur caps, had come out to meet us, and led us into the scrupulously clean waiting-room of the little wooden Frontier Station. The blue and yellow paint, the clean curtains, the fresh-faced waitresses, the steaming hot coffee and crisp rolls seemed all to belong to another world, and when the physical pain of our slowly thawing feet and hands had passed, we began to realise the joys of returning to civilisation. Nevertheless, the long day's wait at Happaranda was very trying. After having enjoyed the excellent luncheon given us in the hotel, there was nothing to do but sit as close as one could to the stove and try to read or sleep the afternoon away. One or two of the braver spirits went for a walk, but came back very soon

announcing that the thermometer registered 48 degrees below zero—80 degrees of frost.

At six o'clock we had dinner and then went down to the station to get into the train for Stockholm. Compartments had been reserved for us, but the comfort was rather marred by the fact of all the water-pipes being frozen, so that if one tried to wash one's hands one immediately flooded one's carriage.

After a journey of a little over forty hours we arrived at Stockholm on Friday evening at six, and stayed a night in the luxurious Grand Hotel, starting again the next evening and arriving at Christiania late on Sunday afternoon.

By now one had begun to have the feeling that life was to continue like this, a constant packing of one's bag, a constant getting in and out of trains, a journey that seemed to go on for ever.

After spending the night at Christiana we started at half-past seven the next morning, and of all the days of the journey I think that one was almost the worst. It began by being intensely cold, but later the carriages became almost unbearably hot, and though we turned off the heating it seemed to make no difference, and puffs of hot air streamed out of the radiators till one's feet seemed to swell to twice their normal size and one's head felt as if it was going to burst. We arrived at Bergen at

one o'clock in the morning, and started at half-past seven, before the town was awake, being smuggled on board the little Norwegian yacht the *Heimdaal*.

We were told that after two hours' journey down the fjord we would arrive at the place where the cruiser that was being sent over from England would meet us, and accordingly we had a very good breakfast and came on deck feeling that at last the final stage of our journey was approaching. But the gray dawn had turned into a blinding snow-storm that became thicker and thicker as we came nearer the sea, till even the little Norwegian destroyer that steamed behind us could hardly be seen amidst the whirling snow-flakes. The captain of the yacht began to look grave and preoccupied, and when we asked him what he thought of the weather and the chances of its clearing up, he shook his head and answered that it probably would not clear up till the evening, if then, and added that he was very much afraid that the cruiser would not be able to find her way. After anchoring and waiting for a little over an hour at the spot that had been appointed for meeting, the captain told us that as she had not arrived it meant that she could not find her way in while the snow-storm lasted, and he asked us what we had rather do. We were altogether eleven

people, and the accommodation on the yacht was not very large, but it was finally decided that to go back to Bergen would be too great a risk, as it would give the Germans too definite an idea of our movements, and therefore it was better to stay on the yacht. Accordingly we steamed to a sheltered little bay, casting anchor there between the snow-covered hills and rocks, and settled down to wait.

Nothing could excel the kindness of the captain, and he took every trouble to make us comfortable at great inconvenience to himself and his officers. We had a most excellent luncheon, during which a diversion was created as one of the little Norwegian destroyers came up alongside and a message was brought to the captain. 'Has she brought news?' we asked. The captain shook his head. 'No,' he answered gravely, 'but she has brought fish for our dinner.' Then, looking round at our disappointed faces, he added with a twinkle in his blue eyes, 'It is almost as important.'

Late in the afternoon the snow-storm cleared, and, hearing vague reports that a ship had been sighted out at sea, we steamed out once more to the appointed meeting-place. But after waiting there for a little, one of the destroyers brought us news that it was only a false alarm, and as it was growing quickly dark we turned back once more to our

little sheltered bay and resigned ourselves to a night of waiting.

The next morning the wind had risen, and there were intervals of sunshine between squalls of snow and sleet, but at eleven the cruiser was sighted and we went out to meet her once more.

It was impossible to tranship in such rough weather, and we had to find a sheltered place to cast anchor once more.

Then at last our large party and all our luggage having been safely got on board, we started out in the teeth of the wind. I think even a hardened sailor would not have called it a good crossing, and the fact that we took twenty-six hours instead of fourteen goes a little way to prove how rough it was. They were all wonderfully kind to us on board that ship, and I am sure, having to turn out of their cabins to make room for us, they can't have loved us very much.

The last two hours before we landed were rather a joy. The wind had dropped and the sun came out, and through the soft mist the coast-line of Scotland gave one a lump in one's throat as being the first sight of home and all that home meant in times like these. British ships of every kind were on all sides now, and once a British sea-plane passed close over our heads; and I wasn't quite sure whether I wanted to laugh or to cry when at

last at four in the afternoon we landed at Leith.

I think the people in the hotel at Edinburgh must have wondered who we were and where on earth we came from, for we were all very hilarious over the dinner we had before starting to London by the night express. The waitresses at our table, who knew all about it, were sympathetic and kind, but the other people in the restaurant, who didn't know all about it, looked at us disapprovingly for making so much noise. And then the beautifully clean train, and the dear little fat Scotch guard, who shook his head over us sympathetically and brought me a quite delicious cup of tea in the morning. It's almost worth being away from England for four years to have that thrilling feeling of coming home again; the quickened heart-beat that catches one's breath, the joy over all the little homely details, the half-incredulous wonder at hearing one's own language all round one, the indescribable smell of London on an early winter morning.

And yet at the back of it all the thought of Petrograd was very present in my mind, and still is as I write. Petrograd with its spires flashing in the sunshine—a city of blue and gold on summer days—a city of dreams through the opal-coloured summer nights—a city, during those last months,

of snow and desolation—and, as I had seen it last, of blue and silver solitude and silence.

'Russia will not let you forget her!' The words come back to me over and over again, and across the miles of sea and snow and mountains the voice of Russia calls, the eyes of Russia smile their elusive, haunted smile, and the hands of Russia are stretched out asking for help in her hour of need.

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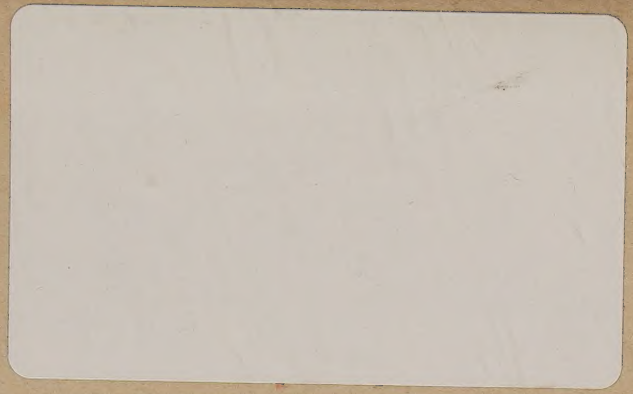

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